

**THE
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STARBURST

**BIGGER THAN EVER BEFORE!
SPECIAL EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW ISSUE**

**DIRECTOR JOHN CARPENTER
ON HIS LATEST SCIENCE FICTION MOVIE
ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK**

THE HOWLING DIRECTOR JOE DANTE

DAVID CRONENBERG ON SCANNERS

**PLUS
THE NEW SERIES OF BLAKE'S 7
RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK
AND MUCH, MUCH MORE BESIDES!**

**RINGO
STARS
IN A
NEW
COMEDY
MOVIE**



CAVEMAN FILM REVIEW



SARAH DOUGLAS

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NEW FILM FROM HALLOWEEN
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WHO IS INTERVIEWED ON PAGE 32.



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STARBURST LETTERS

I SAY, I SAY, I SAY...

Is it true that, due to inflation, the next series of Buck Rogers in the 25th Century will be called Twelve Dollars Rogers in the 25th Century?

John Connolly,
New Barnet,
Herts.

SPEILBERG DEFENCE

As a regular reader of Starburst I feel I must complain about the constant derogatory remarks John Brosnan and Tony Crawley make about the greatest director in movie history, Steven Spielberg.

Obviously, they are as entitled to their opinions as I am to mine but it seems rather strange that they did not start on the "let's make fun of Steve Spielberg" campaign until 1941 flopped. This would seem to indicate that Messrs Crawley and Brosnan do not judge a movie maker on his ability to entertain but on how much his film grosses. I, for one, found 1941 greatly enjoyable.

The worst of these numerous knocks at Spielberg came from Brosnan in Starburst 28, when reviewing the Special Edition of *Close Encounters* he says, "... you just have to watch it with your forebrain switched off". Huh! Obviously, Mr Brosnan had left his brain at home when he saw the film as he ignored so many of the film's objectives and truths he could not have been thinking properly. And, incredibly, in that same issue, Brosnan heaps praise on the banal, predictable and poorly handled *Dressed to Kill*!

Finally, in his article, Brosnan states he felt "that Spielberg made a mistake by showing the aliens". This statement shows how

little thought Brosnan has put into the review. The whole object of the film is *contact with alien life forms*. *Close Encounters* without the aliens would be like *Jaws* without the shark.

So please Starburst, remember what Spielberg has done for the industry. And give him credit, because credit is most certainly due.

Roll on *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.
Mika Jenner,
Hatfield,
Herts.

Alan McKenzie replies: "Though Close Encounters is woefully old news by now, I feel that your letter deserves a reply. I'm sure that any criticism John Brosnan and Tony Crawley have for Steven Spielberg is not directed at his undoubted ability as a director, but rather at his towering over-confidence in his own infallibility. John Brosnan's remark about switched off forebrains referred to the fact that Close Encounters contained several dramatic inconsistencies, all of which was clearly covered in the review so I won't reiterate the matter here."

"Spielberg is not infallible, as 1941 proved. To think otherwise is to lose touch with the realities of film business. It was the actress Marie Dressler who said 'you're only as good as your last picture.'"

"And as far as Raiders of the Lost Ark is concerned, I felt the presence of George Lucas in the film far more than that of Steven Spielberg. The movie was cast more in the mould of Star Wars than any of Spielberg's pictures."

"But I still think Spielberg is a terrific director!"

FRENCH SF

I would just like to say well done on another fine string of articles lined up in Starburst 34.

The Martin Bower interview, especially, was informative and interesting as well as having a funny side to it in places, but it also shows what you can do when you set your mind to it and Martin Bower has certainly had that dedication and perseverance which is a good example to others who wish to follow in his footsteps. It was obviously understandable that he was surprised to get such a response from Garry Anderson, where as nowadays you hardly get any response at all from some people

who are lucky or fortunate to be in the sci-fi fantasy business.

Elsewhere, in issue 34, I'm sure most readers like myself must have been glad to see Phil Edwards getting around to one of the best *SF Classics*, 2001. As I had never managed to see it before, I was pleased to see it reissued at a local cinema earlier this year, and the opportunity was jumped on! Even today the film stands out very highly amongst present technical wonders and it's hard to imagine that it's now 13 years since it was first released.

Again, excellent research, especially into the background of the actual filming and also some fine stills to go with it.

Meanwhile I think it was in Starburst 33, that you pondered on when the fourth series of *Bleke's 7* was to be screened. I hear that it's in September, although you probably know by now. However most fans of *Bleke's 7* (as well as *Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy*) are being treated to another helping of their respective series, and both being shown by the BBC together.

Graham Lewis,
S. Yorks.

WELL DONE!

First let me say how much I appreciate your magazine.

In your last issue you mentioned *Melvil* as the great hope of the current French sf movie trend; in fact it is the disappointment of the year: it is boring and visually unappealing. Undoubtedly the best part of it is the poster ad!

I perfectly agree with Mr Brosnan when he says that *The Black Hole* or *Star Wars* are not real sf movies. I think that science fiction/fantasy are stories related to reactions of a system/entity to something alien to this system/entity. So an sf/fantasy story has to answer two questions - What is the Alien? and What is the appropriate reaction to it?

The second question allows to distinction between what I would call first level and second level stories. The first level is when the reaction to the Alien is common/typical of the system; the second level story finds its solution in the Alien's own system. The distinction between sf and fantasy is only whether the reference system is rational/scientific or supernatural. Fantasy is (if you follow my classification) a conventional plot in an universe that is alien for the audience only but mundane for the

characters.

Most sf stories are also fantasy stories because they're situated in a world different from our present universe.

If you confront our classical movies to this classification you will see that there were only 3 sf movies in the recent years: *Alien* (but it is only a first level story as roasting the creature in the jet exhausts hardly calls for understanding it).

Ster Trek MP (the end was so much related to V'Ger's own system that I confess not having understood it at all).

Time after Time (truly a second level story).

But there is also something that could be added to my theory: As the audiences are in their largest part common Earthlings, the film makers cannot show them something too alien so the sf part has to be played down and that could explain many things.

I would like to add a fourth category to the previous 3: the weird stories. In this category could fall such stories that show our common world but slightly warped to give it a bizarre look, like in *Superman*, *Avengers* (tv) and ... *James Bond* ...

And this introduces the last part of this letter: contrary to most Bond fans and Mr Brosnan I think that the early Roger Moore movies are the best of the series so far (the very best being *The Spy*



Who Loved Me in my opinion).

I would like to explain how I arrived at this opinion. I am too young for having seen the Sean Connery movies when they were first released so what I first knew of JB was his mythology: an ever-cool secret agent, submerged by beautiful girls and gadgetry and fighting the weird people of Spectre. So when I first read the books I was quite disappointed. But the Roger Moore movies were really wonderful (with the exception of Moonraker, that is real rubbish).

I agree with all those who say that Moore does not look like a secret agent (in fact he looks like he was playing Lord Sinclair playing the spy) but that's why he is (for me) a better JB than Sean Connery. Sean Connery is too much a secret agent in the early movies, there is no real difference between JB and OSS117 or Manix as he played him. Moore is less realistic than Connery in the character of JB but for me it is an asset as always understood JB movies as entirely for fun and never serious spy stories. Everything has to be self-mocking, unbelievable and overscale (so I plainly approve Ken Adams sets and odd villains like 'Jaws' or Rosa Klebb. A pity they don't get married).

Last: what about a 'Specacash Special' and a 'Gerry Anderson's gadgetry special'?

Jean Christopher Carbone,
 Paris,
 France.

A CALL FOR LESS CENSORSHIP



Before coming to my main reason for writing I'd like to make a few brief comments on Starburst. Although I don't always agree with your writers, (does anyone?), I think Starburst is an excellent publication, and of course half the pleasure of reading it is in agreeing or disagreeing as the case may be. John Brosnan may be pleased to know that I own copies of *The Horror People* and *Movie Magic*, and thoroughly enjoyed them both, and he is to be congratulated for never failing to produce stimulating and amusing reviews and articles. Phil Edwards' recent articles on the three Universal/Karloff

Frankenstein films told us nothing new really, but all the same I was delighted to see these older film masterpieces getting some coverage and I hope this trend continues. I am also pleased to see you giving

more space to good horror films such as *Motel Hell* (Kevin Connor has found out where his skill lies at last), *The Howling* and *The Funhouse*. I thought *Funhouse* was truly brilliant, with the most stunning climax I've seen in a long time, and which clearly owed something to *James Whale*. I wondered, however, why Alan Jones failed to mention *My Bloody Valentine*, which is doing the rounds with *Funhouse*! It may not be a classic, but it contains some fine scenes and a very neat ending. This brings me, indirectly I suppose on to my main point, which is censorship.

I also read an American horror film magazine and they recently had a feature on *My Bloody Valentine*. They printed several stills from the film, which showed some excellent (and very gory)

make-up effects, most of which seemed to be missing from the print I saw. The murder scenes seemed to finish too quickly, jumping to the next scene before we had a chance to see anything. (Some of us don't mind paying £2 to see people bloodily murdered in a variety of interesting ways!). Can you tell me, or is there any way of finding out, if this film was censored in Britain. George Romero's excellent *Zombies - Dawn of the Dead* was obviously and mercilessly hacked up, which was totally ridiculous as the scenes that were removed were no worse than what was left in. When I saw *Zombies*, the audience cheered and laughed each time Tom Savini's stunning effects were unleashed on the screen, which was totally in keeping with the 'comic book' atmosphere of this particular film.

People know that a horror film will often be gory, the title alone often suggests this, so why on earth do British film censors persist in this annoying and pointless exercise? I suppose I'd better admit I'm opposed to cuts being made in any sort of film, whether it concerns obscene language, sex, or violence, but with fantasy films it seems even more ridiculous. I can't really see an end to this censorship, but I would at least like to be told when a film has been altered, presumably against the director's wishes, and certainly against mine. I wonder whether *Maniac* will survive this treatment when it finally reaches British cinemas.

J. Ward,
 Wallaton,
 Nottingham.

Sorry, but we cannot enter into correspondence with readers nor reply personally to a letter.



Top: A scene from *Zombies: Dawn of the Dead* (see A Call for Less-Censorship). Far left Steven Spielberg on the set of *Raiders* (see Spielberg Defence). Left: A spectacular stuntman from *Live and Let Die* (see Well Done!).

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THINGS TO COME

CANNES 34

Cannes festival time again, when the things to come in my column are not merely mentions of new films due for release or for shooting and headed our way sometime (perhaps never?) but also of various interviews to be sprinkled across our features pages as Ye Editor dictates over the upcoming issues... Jeannot Szwarc, for example, on rescuing *Jaws II*, how he persuaded Hollywood to back *Somewhere in Time*... Martin Sheen agreeing he made *The Final Countdown* just for the money, and doesn't like any of his films anyway... David Giler on *Alien's* original script and the possibility of a sequel... George Romero's partner, Richard Rubinstein, on how Romero and Stephen King joined forces... and many more...

Fantasy films were everywhere during the 34th Cannes fest; indeed, there were times, that Cannes itself became something of a fantasy. Science fiction was thin on the ground, although rich in promise, and horror continued to increase and multiply and not always for the good... As dear old Sam Arkoff said about Hollywood mega-budgets today, there's more horror stories behind the cameras than in front of them.

SHOCK AWARDS

It began as the embodiment of the old filmed cliché—"It's quiet." "Yeah... too quiet!"—and ended with a surprise in the tail. The best actress award stayed at home, going to the one French mam'zelle who does absolutely nothing for me, Isabelle Adjani—and for, basically, a horror genre exercise. I say "basically" because the award was shared between her work, soft and heavy, in two French entries—the Anglo-French *Quartet* and the all-French (albeit, shot by a Polish director) *Possession*.

I also have to say "basically", because although *Possession* is a total horror experience, it is not good. Not good at all. Too fancy, by half. It is, in essence, little more than the good old-fashioned monster in the back room number, but dressed in pseudo-intellectual and artistic fashion by director Andrzej Zulawski. Various of Zulawski's earlier films—including the science fiction item he was prevented from finishing, *The Silver Globe*—were banned in his native Poland. And I must say, if *Possession* is like them, one can almost see why. He utilises a wholly bizarre stylisation for his camera (the film is shot in blue and white for a kick-off) and for his actors, including the ever-cold Adjani and *The Final Conflict's* New Zealand

GENRE WINS

Incidentally, the winner of the competition's best supporting actor prize—for his abrasive athletics coach in *Chariots of Fire*—was our old friend, Ian Holm. Alias, the *Alien* robot. John Boorman won a special award (best director, in effect, but phrased as best artistic contribution) in respect of his poetic atmosphere in *Excalibur*.

Hollywood's Ellen Burstyn, star of

both *The Exorcist* and *Resurrection*, was the only woman on the jury, and could have been instrumental in the otherwise inexplicable victory of Milla Jovovich... And fresh from completing his galactic *High Noon*—Peter Hyams' *Outland*, touted as the film of the summer—Sean Connery winged in from his Marbella home in Spain to help present the jury's awards.

Things are really looking up fantasy film wise!



KING & ROMERO

But the best horror film, I fancy, is yet to come. Hardest sell message of the entire festival of films, stars, ads, topless starlets (bottomless, too, one of them) and all the other hyped up claims, came from the newly-formed team of Stephen King and George Romero. Neither of them, though, felt it should be added to their smashing *Creepshow* poster, which was quickly selling for a fiver a throw after a few days, a tenner after one week, and rising faster than British inflation by

the end of the fortnight.

"What George and I plan to do," ran Stephen King's hard-sell vow, "is scare an audience so badly and so continuously that after 120 minutes of cinema, the audience will almost literally have to crawl out of the theatre!"

"Almost literally..." That doesn't sound like Romero to me. He won't be satisfied with anything less than a literal crawl on all fours, I'll be bound...

Obviously their real aim is for none of us to be brave enough to enter another cinema until a year or so later, when their next venture will be ready for release—*The Stand*.

Damien, Sam Neill.

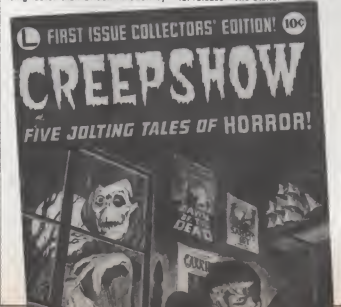
My review follows in a later issue, but there's not a lot I can say in favour of the film, or indeed of any film, which insists on its leading lady vomiting for real on-camera!

Day 1: Caroline Munro is even here making her latest movie *The Last Horror Film* slap bang in the middle of the Cannes festivities... which is not an easy or sensible thing to do.



SHOOT SHOTS

"It's my first science fiction movie and continues my career of being cast in almost an entirely different role each time out." This is Steve Railsback, once US-TV's Manson and more recently Richard Rush's brilliant *Stuntman*, on his new British-backed movie, *Turkey Shoot*, which started shooting June 15 down-under with top Aussie action-man, Brian Trenchard-Smith directing. "I loved George Orwell's *1984* and the *Logan's Run* movie," adds Steve, "and there's a combination of both in *Turkey Shoot*."



The world is carefully run of line you are labelled a means you are a can

TURKEY SHOOT

Compiled by Tony Crawley

Day 2: Arriving at the Hotel Martinez for an interview session I run into David Winters directing his first and *Last Horror Film* on the ground floor. He had his cameras shooting straight up through the spiral staircase... very Hitchcockian! But, where's Caroline...? I'll tell.

Day 2: Caroline Munro's co-star in her Cannes caper proves to be, but of course, her *Maniac* partner, Joe Spinell... being lauded here as le roi du film d'horreur.

LINDA'S HELL

First actual film buy I heard of—there's always a lot of talk, but few contracts are actually signed in Cannes—was Linda Blair's apparent final horror flick, *Hell Night*, directed in the California hamlet of Radiands by Tom DeSimone. Michael Myers, head man of Miracle Films, picked this one up for British release, as only to be expected. Irwin Yablans co-produced

The setting of the John George and Neill Hicks yarn is a restricted futuristic society where non-conformity can be fatal. Non-conformists are labelled Turkeys and undergo re-education programming at process centres. A ruthless camp-master allows Steve's group (including ex-Juliet Olivia Hussey in her second sf film after Japan's *Virus*) to try and flee a hunting game where they are the targets. "Violence today can be seen mirrored in the future," comments Olivia, "and I think this picture will shock people. It has a lot of action, especially running. Steve and I are preparing for it by doing a lot of jogging and swimming."

Hell Night and one of Miracle's biggest winners in recent years was the Yablans' production of John Carpenter's *Halloween*.

Linda Blair is now 22, still young and chubby enough to pass as Ellen Burstyn's Regan, and is trying to break out of the typecasting *The Exorcist* dropped her into. "Lucille Ball is my real idol," she says. "After her, it's Jane Fonda, of course. I enjoy heavy drama but I wouldn't refuse one of Goldie Hawn's cast-offs, but they never offer comedy to me."

Hell Night is another out of the *Prom Night* genre, following ceremonies into a college society. The joke goes wrong and all hell is let loose. "It was freezing when we shot it and the wind-machine didn't help," reports Linda. "Also, I've never been so bruised in all my life. My character is running all through the movie—in underground tunnels, up a rope-ladder and up steep staircases."

Day 3: Back at the Martinez for another interview, I find David Winters directing Caroline's movie on the top floor. This time he had his camera shooting straight down through the spiral staircase. It figures.

COLLEGE HELL

Herd on the heels of Linda Blair's movie is *Final Exam* from Avco Embassy, the combine that gave you *The Fog*, *The Howling*, *Road Games*,



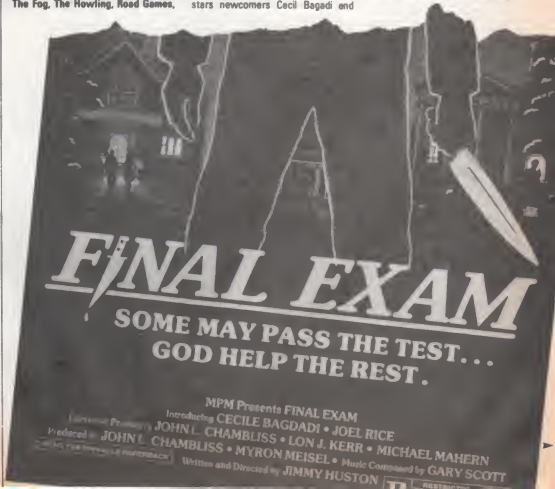
and the start of the college horror stuff, *Prom Night*. (It's also the company whose head honcho said horror was played out). This new version of the Joe College gets his syndrome stars newcomers Cecil Bagadi and

Joel Rice in a script written and directed by Jimmy Huston. Please note: I said *Jimmy*... (Not that anyone would go to another John Huston fantasy trip after *Phobia*, anyway!)

95

strict régime. If you step out
y'. Further failure to conform
e for the 'Turkey Shoot'.

KEY
SHOT



THINGS TO COME

Day 4: Joe Spinell is free for three minutes during Carlton Hotel shooting. So am I. We talk. Or is growl the word? Seems Joe's real monicker is Giovanni Giuseppe Spagnolo. He's 44. In movies since nine. Reckons he's made 120 films in all. And furious that French censors have banned his only starring hit, *Maniac*. After Cannes, he'll be joining Paul Lynch's new one, *The Graduation Party*. End of mini interview.

Day 5: I'm invited to take part in *Caroline's* movie. Left in my Press box, the invitation is to take part in a mock Press conference for Cannes Best Actress Jana Bates (Caroline Munro) at 5pm one night. Are you kidding? I'm still working there. Seeing some movie. Or interviewing somebody. Make it Zam and I might be able to make it.

Day 7: Stepping out of the Martinez lift, I walk straight into *Caroline's* movie and into beautiful Caroline herself. In wet hair and bathrobe. Hmml! Fortunately, it was just a rehearsal I barged into. I stick around and watch the take. A loud one. She runs from a corridor, screaming blue, if not bloody, murder, and battering her hands against an unyielding lift door. She sounded terrific. But what is this film about. . . She's too busy to tell me.

RETURN OF AIP

Best industry news at Cannes: Sam Arkoff's back in business. Sam is the 73-year-young independent tycoon who co-founded American International Pictures, better known, revered and adored as AIP, in 1954. AIP was America's seventh largest distributor in 1979, when Arkoff merged it with Filmways, and took a top spot as the new combine's largest stockholder. He then quit after a row over Filmways film plans—since when Filmways has been in immense financial trouble despite (or maybe because of) backing Brian De Palma's films. Sam, then, was left out in the cold. A legend, the literal godfather for Corman and Co, without a base. Not for long. He returned to Cannes in May to announce a spate of six movies for his newly formed Arkoff International Pictures. . . AIP lives!

The new AIP will pick up the gemmies which the old AIP put down," says Sam. "We two, includes his son, Louis S. Arkoff" intend to reflect the popular cult of the 80s, and, hopefully, the '90s. As in the past, I shall continue to follow my open-door policy. My new company will welcome the new producers, writers, directors, as well as the established creative people who have something exciting to offer—and are willing to put every dollar on the screen.

"While I don't question the view that the average film now costs ten million dollars, I simply query the necessity that it should cost that much. . . Three of my most recent successes, *Love At First Bite*, *The Amityville Horror* and *Dressed to Kill* cost a total of less than 15 million dollars!" The first new AIP movie has just completed shooting—*Three Blind Mice*, a suspense, written by Ronald Shusett, co-author with Den O'Bannon of *Alien* and *Dead and Buried*. Sam Arkoff has also given the green light to *Getting Even*, produced by Michael Miller, who made Corman's *Jackson County Jail* thriller. . . a comedy from two of the Hevard Lampoon wits. . . and *Heed or Tails*, from the writer-producer of *Love At First Bite*. Robert Kaufman. Welcome back, Sam. . .

STUNNING

Of all the 500 movies on show—or the 52 I saw—the most exciting footage on any screen belonged to a Franco-Canadian movie three years in the making. The title? *Quest for Fire*. The subject? A stunningly realistic recreation of the violent world of stone-age man. A short promotion reel was shown during the fortnight and everyone who saw it talked about little else until departing Cannes. The director is Frenchman Jean-Jacques Annaud, who won the Best Foreign Language Oscar in 1978 for his first movie, *Black and White in Colour*. His

executive producer is Michael Gruskoff, whose credits include *Young Frankenstein* and *Nosferatu*. And the script, from J.H. Rosny's novel, is by Polanski's chief scripter, Gerard Brach.

I promise you more on this movie later even if it's not science fiction, not horror, not even fantasy, but something of a stone-age documentary. But as the director says, "The future began—80,000 years ago." Kubrick, of course, used primeval man at the start of 2001. This film stays with them—and if the entire film can match the impact of its promo reel, or trailer, it's a masterpiece.

U.S. WEREWOLF

Fast-talkin' John Landis rushed straight from his plane at Nice to a crowded *petite salle* in the Palais building to run his first screening of an *American Werewolf in London* promo reel—and then immediately apologised for it. "The sound is terrible. The picture framing is Academy and not how I shot it. But then this isn't even for you Press guys. . . It's for buyers. And it's gotta have a bit of everything for them. What do they do know? But it's really not what I'd choose to show you. . ." His dismay was understandable. He's been fighting to make this film for some years, and even the success of *Animal House* and *The Blues Brothers* didn't help him to get it rolling. "Studies always said, it's too funny to be a horror—and too horrific to be a comedy. They miss the point. This is not a comedy! It has some laughs in it. But it is a scary movie, OK?" OK!

We talked again later in the week, but as I gather he's also been talking his head off to Phil Edwards in London, I doubt if you'll get to read my version. Then again as we mainly discuss his amazing effects man Rick Baker only, maybe you will. Instead, maybe our esteemed Editor will run my chat with Landis' female star, Jenny Agutter—who looks terrific in the film, the kind of fantasy nurse we'd all like to have make the patient and not the bed. And the promo reel? Terrific. Particularly Baker's suddenly elongating hand effect, not to mention his continually decomposing corpse for actor Griffin Dunne. Dunne to death, one might say.



A big hand for Landis. In one of the best effects seen on the Cannes screens, David Naughton (above) turns into an American Werewolf in London. Director John Landis (below) showed a promo reel of the film accentuating both the comedy and the shock areas of the movie. Effects by Rick Baker, of course.



THINGS TO COME

Day 9: At last, I find Caroline Munro free from movie-cameras, though surrounded by paparazzi photographers, amazed that she refused to strip. She's enjoying (?) an afternoon off on the Hotel Carlton terrace. She introduces me to director David Winters, who is also the film's co-producer with her hubby, Judd Hamilton. "Judd's here," says she. Really-where? "Here!" Good lord, he's right next to her and unrecognisable in his new blond rince. I make my excuses and leave. We'll meet at the next night's evening shoot.

Day 11: Finally, I find out what Caroline's movie is all about. Joe Spinell hates people making horror films and comes to Cannes to knock 'em off, with the festival's Best Actress prize-winner, Caroline, as his main target. He kidnaps her to his castle to act in his ultimate horror film, *Loves of Dracula*, in which they will die together in... you've got it, the last horror film. In short, it's a film about the people who dig blood-thirsty films like *Maniac*. Now that sounds familiar... to me.

Day 12: I find Judd Hamilton and say: "Hey, you're making our film. We agreed here last year, when you were none too pleased with all the blood in *Maniac*, that you should make a movie about people who dig such horror movies."

"That's right," grins Judd. "And I keep telling 'em that. But no one believes I had the idea a year ago. We only wrote the script five weeks ago."

"I'll see you later," I say. "About my percentage..."

with *The Cult*, co-starring everyone's pat horror, Larry Hagman... Alan Beattie's *Delusions*, with old Joseph Cotten in a guest role, is one to miss. Like its hype, "it's deadly, demantad, demonic." And in this case that ain't good... A previous Cannes prize-winner, Germany director Karoly Makk, joined the terror trail with

Helmut Berger, Mel Ferrer and Fassbinder's new signing, Berbe Sukowa, enacting a *Deadly Game* in a mountain hunting lodge. Stylish, if hardly new—it's the one about when hunting game turns into the ultimate sport, hunting man... More terror in Californian high-school (yawn, yawn) due in *Lovely but Deadly*... The hero

of *Nocturne*, a certain Count Rudiski, can see in the dark and uses night vision to waste all the baddies... Producers Pieter Kronsbeurg and David Patterson are chasing after Gene Hackman and Roy Scheider to unite for the first time since *The French Connection* for their Canadian suspense-shocker, *Collision*... Same two producers described their *Cross Country* as a chiller in the *Dressed to kill* mould. Don't they mean: mouldy?

A Tale of Two Ads. Horror films that are such clones as *Friday the 13th* (I or II) and *The Burning* are one thing, but now the ad art hype is also in need of some originality. For example...

Incubus, sub-titled, "the ultimate power of evil", is John Hough's new Canadian feature, starring John Cassavetes, Hough's old mate from *Brass Target*, old-timer John Ireland and the inevitable luscious newcomer, Kerrie Keane. The film stems from a Ray Russell story, which can't be bed.

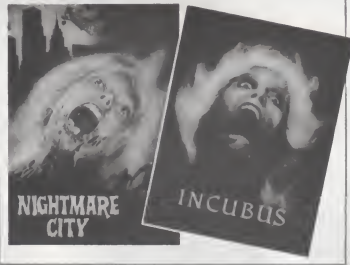
Nightmare City, on the other blood-soaked hand, can best be summed up with a Government health warning that Hugo Stiglitz is the alleged star. You'll recall Hugo, with all the appropriate wince, from such Rene Cardona Mexicana rubbish as *Tintorero*. And there's scanty improvement in Hugo's non-acting now that

he's joined the spaghetti horrors of Rome alongside Mel Ferrer, Spaniard Francisco Rabal and local lovelies Laura Trotter and Rosaria Omaggio.

As to the obvious question of which ad art came first, one would immediately presuppose that *Incubus*, being the more professional of the two movies, had been plagiarised by the Italians, the world experts in ripping off genres as well as hype. But the opposite is true. I seem to remember seeing *Nightmare City* being sold in Cannes last year as well. Indeed, unless my Cannes befuddled mind deceives me (so how would you feel after 52 films in 14 days?), I think I even saw the film last year... This then must be something of an historic moment. Italy has been off-ripped by Canada and American publicists!

Day 14: Chatting to one of the *Last Horror Film* technicians by their lorry-load of equipment, I found a young guy named Ivan Franks from Ilford. He's the youngest prosthetic make-up artist in British movies. "I've just finished work on the new Muppet movie, and came here on holiday," he said. "Heard about this film and now David Winters is flying me home and back to pick up my make-up kits and start making a few hacked-off arms and legs and other effects. This is proving the best holiday I've ever had."

Day 14: Still more doubts... Overheard from the unit shooting outside the Hotel Carlton. "We're just winging it, ya know. Making it all up as we go along. Improvising, is that what they call it?"



CANNES CUTTINGS

Michael Caine continues his fantasy tripping, after *The Island*, *Dressed to Kill*, *The Hand* and *The Death Trap*.

A parting shot: For now, let me leave you with some stray thoughts... Though I wish lovely Caroline Munro, Judd Hamilton, Joe Spinell and David Winters (and Ivan Franks) all good fortune with *The Last Horror Film*, I have many nagging doubts about what is obviously an exceedingly rushed antiprize. If they were winging it while the festival was on, I trust they settled down to a proper shooting script now that

the 40,000 festival revellers have decamped. Yet I cannot help recalling that a couple of years ago, no less a film-maker than Michael Ritchie shot a film here with Keith Carradine and Monica Vitti... and it was never heard of again. Last year, the ubiquitous Dick Randall shot something called *Emmanuelle in Cannes*—that was never heard of again, either.

Maybe Caroline will make it third time lucky. But it is carrying

exploitation—and indeed, human endeavour—to the limit to attempt to shoot a movie while the festival madness is afoot in every major hotel end main street corner and hotel terrace. Caroline and Co may have finished up with heaps of publicity—but when I left, no and to their script.

You don't have to make a movie to get publicity in Cannes. You just have to be there with a completed movie, a new script, a package

TO BE CONT'D

I wish I could say the same. Cannes is no holiday. It's hard work Wirth, admittedly, a lot of fun thrown in. And I have much more to report on that will have to wait, due to pressure of space until next month. News of *Smokey and the Bandit* director Hal Needham's entry into science fiction with *Megaforce*... the second-best Cannes poster... Israel's first of film, from a company calling itself Thirtieth Century Films... what *The Exterminator* team is up to now... what Jess Franco is doing, apart from shaving off his beard... and all about Paul Lynch's follow up to *Prom Night*, which is about of *Prom Night on the Island* in a *Blue Lagoon*... or funk.

deal or even an idea.

We'll see soon enough—for I'm sure there will be a result. Judd Hamilton is too cenny a producer to waste either his or Caroline's time, let alone the two million dollar budget he had amassed. Yet time and time again I heard the same reaction from some of the Hollywood guys as they looked upon the street shooting. "D'you really think they've got film in their cameras?"

terror eyes terror eyes

TERROR

eyes

Who is the helmeted black leather-clad figure brutally decapitating female students attending Vincent Millett's anthropology lectures at Wendell College's night school classes?

Oh no, not *another* one! Yes, I'm afraid so, but at least this one is easy to work out and perhaps that's one of its biggest faults. Watching the red herrings being introduced into the usual formula of college girls, Peeping Toms, shower scenes and ludicrous motivation drove me to distraction. The only light relief from the (now surely?) computerised scenes of teenage angst and bungled police detection is the usual angle concerning Papuan New Guinea head hunting rituals, but this is no recommendation as the idea comes across as stupid rather than inventive.

Kenneth Hughes, (the veteran director of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and *Cromwell* fame) directs by numbers and as such the film is efficient but not in the least bit scary. It really is getting to the point

where anybody who has seen a handful of these type of films could direct one — they are all so predictable in every respect. The decapitations by the machete wielding maniac are all suggested rather than graphically shown which means that *Terror Eyes* doesn't have any spectacular special effects set pieces to make a visit by discriminating collectors worthwhile.

What finally writes the movie off in terms of a real disaster is the very bad acting of Rachel Ward who plays the pivotal role of Eleanor Adjai. Her performance has to be seen to be believed and dissipates any suspense generated in the few final minutes.

Terror Eyes is one long yawn from start to finish but unfortunately isn't the last word on the subject. We still have *Final Exam*, *Fear No Evil* and *Graduation Day* to come and who knows how many more in production. ZZZZ!

(NB: Rumour has it that the title will be changed in the US to *Night school*.) ●



Review by Alan Jones

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Happy Birthday To Me...

Review by Alan Jones

This has to be the worst example yet of this season's cycle of classroom homicides.

Who is killing the group of teenagers nicknamed the Top Ten of Crawford High School and why? Don't even bother trying to work it all out as the denouement contained in the climactic birthday party has twists and turns that will boggle even the most able of minds.

This is from the Canadian production team of John Dunning and Andre Link who recently made the vastly superior *My Bloody Valentine* and is directed by veteran J. Lee Thompson. Thompson's obvious loathing of accepting such a film is shown in the detachment apparent in every frame. Confusion in an already-muddled story is mistaken for suspense and mystery and this sloppiness carries through to the editing and even the marketing as the poster teaser gets the names of the victims wrong. John may never eat shish kebab again, but who's he? That certainly isn't the name of the person who gets impaled through the mouth with a skewer. Neither will it be Steve who'll never ride a motorbike again and while we're on the subject these certainly aren't "the six most bizarre murders you will ever see"; they are very much lower grade state-of-the-art. Melissa Sue Anderson from television's *Little House on the Prairie* stars as Virginia and another person who should have known better is Glenn Ford who meets an ignominious demise as her psychiatrist. The rest of the cast are dreary and unattractive cyphers who, quite honestly, you just can't wait to see the end of.

There is only one line on the poster of *Happy Birthday To Me* that you should take very seriously—Pray you're not invited. ●



Happy Birthday To Me (1981)

Melissa Sue Anderson (*Virginia*), Glenn Ford (*Dr Faraday*), Lawrence Dane (*Hal Weinwright*), Sharon Acker (*Estelle*), Frances Hyland (*Mrs Patterson*), Tracy Bregman (*Ann Patterson*), Jack Blum (*Alfred*), Matt Craben (*Steve*), Lenore Zann (*Maggie*), David Eisner (*Rudi*), Lisa Langois (*Amelia*), Michel Rene Labelle (*Etienne*), Richard Rebiere (*Greg*), Leslie Donaldson (*Bernadette*), Earl Pennington (*Lieutenant Tracy*), Murray Westgate (*Gatekeeper*), Jerome Tiberghien (*Prof Heregard*), Maurice Podbrey (*Dr Feinblum*).

Directed by Lee J. Thompson. Screenplay by John Saxton, Peter Jolin and Timothy Bond from a story by John Saxton. Photographed by Miklos Lente. Music by Bo Harwood and Lance Rubin. Production design by Earl Preston. Edited by Debra Karen. Associate producer Lawrence Ness. Line producer Stewart Harding. Produced by John Dunning and Andre Link.

Time: 111 mins

Cert: X

CONDORMAN

That Walt Disney's new film, *Condorman*, begins with an animated titles sequence will come as no great surprise to many readers. But that it is a singularly uninventive piece of animation does stretch the credibility thin. It consists solely of one sight gag, that of a man in a bird costume hurtling past the camera too many times, wobbling dangerously and yelling a lot. Whether this animated ineptitude is deliberate or not is difficult to tell. For when the film proper arrives the real-life action positively shines in comparison, though taken alone it would hardly be classed as outstanding cinema.

Michael Crawford (wearing an ill-judged American accent) plays Woody Wilkins, a cartoonist to trade, whose best friend Harry Oslo (*James Hampton*), is a tiny cog in the mighty CIA machinery stationed in Paris. The CIA needs some papers delivered to Istanbul by a civilian. Guess who gets elected? Crawford plays the part of Woody amiably enough, though there is a distinct flavour of Frank Spencer underlying the transatlantic surface.

In Istanbul, Woody meets Natalia, a

beautiful (mmm!) KGB agent, becomes involved in a brawl with operatives of the Red Chinese secret service and successfully escapes with life and limb intact.

Returning to Paris he is told of the important Russian defector who will only deal with the great *Condorman*... Woody. Naturally the Russian defector is none other than Natalia. But matters are complicated by the interest top Russian agent Krovov (an excellent performance by Oliver Reed) takes in the defection.

From here on the film becomes a wild melee of car chases, powerboat battles and hairsbreadth escapes. Mechanical though some of the action is, the film does have its moments. One sequence that brings a tear to the eye is the heartless destruction of six Proche sports cars during a running battle with the *Condorcar*.

The film sets out to be a light-hearted spoof of the Bond series of films with its roots firmly imbedded in the Jack Lemmon comedy *How to Murder Your Wife*. Like Lemmon's *Bash Brannigan*, Crawford's *Condorman* never performs a stunt in the comic strip that the author has not first authenticated.

One of the film's major letdowns is the *Condorman* flying sequences. Involved in the special effects was Superman's Colin Chilvers. But don't let that fool you. The wires are clearly visible in every flying shot, which is a pity. Superman proved that you'll believe a man can fly, but *Condorman* does nothing to perpetuate that belief.

Overall *Condorman* is an entertaining film. But it seems a pity that a little more thought wasn't put into the production. While the film will probably prove a hit with the younger audiences, it wasn't this particular reviewer's cup of tea.

Condorman (1981)

Michael Crawford (as Woody Wilkins/*Condorman*), Barbara Carrera (*Natalia*), James Hampton (*Harry Oslo*), Dana Elcar (*Russ Devlin*), Oliver Reed (*Krovov*), Jean-Pierre Kalfon (*Morovich*).

Directed by Charles Jarrott, Screenplay by Marc Sturdivant, Glenn Caron and Mickey Rose, Edited by Gordon D. Brenner, Music by Henry Mancini, Special effects supervisor Colin Chilvers, Special effects photography by Art Crulshank, Stunts supervisor Remy Julienne, Make-up supervisor Robert J. Schiffer, Meke-up by Den Striepeke, Co-produced by Jan Williams, Produced by Ron Miller.
Time: 90 mins

Cert: U



FRIDAY THE 13TH PART 2

You remember Part 1, of course (how could you ever forget it). Well, just in case you don't the makers of Part 2 include a long chunk of Part 1 at the start of Part 2 to refresh your memory. We see the lone survivor, Alice (*Adrienne King*) once again behead the mad killer, Mrs Voorhees (*Betsy Palmer*), and escape into the lake in a boat, only to have the grotesque shape of Mrs Voorhees' drowned son rise out of the water and grab her.

Now I presumed, and so did Alice, that this last bit was all a dream but it turns out that Mrs Voorhees' deformed son, Jason, isn't dead but has been living wild in the woods since the time of his disappearance (in which case why didn't he make contact with his beloved mother?)

Time has passed but poor Alice, not surprisingly, is still dreaming about her unusual experiences as holiday camp counsellor and still feeling very jittery. And it turns out she has good reasons to feel jittery, for Jason, despite having a face like an exploded turnip and the IQ of a mollusc, has somehow succeeded in tracking her down to her city apartment (how he did this while wearing a bag over his head as well is a big mystery—perhaps the answer will be in part 3). First, he leaves a nasty surprise among the fish fingers in Alice's refrigerator—his mother's head—and then he... but no, I can't go on.

Five years later a fresh bunch of young camp counsellors are preparing to open a summer camp right near the site of the old one. They've heard rumours about Jason lurking in the woods but for some reason don't seem to be aware that a massacre took place there. As before the girls are all young

and nubile (very nubile) and the men handsome and muscular, even the one in the wheelchair. The main difference is that there are a lot more of them this time and I was puzzled how the mad killer would be able to get through them all in the time allotted. At the very least he would develop a bad case of killer's elbow or whatever. But lol the script writer solves this problem by having half the group go off for a night on the town and it's only the ones left behind in the camp who become the victims.

Some quick hacking, stabbing, chopping and slicing and before you know it there's only one girl victim left and being chased all over the place by the mad killer, just like Part 1. And as in Part 1 no matter how many times she apparently gets rid of the killer up he pops again like the Coyote in the *Road Runner* cartoons. Like all the mad killers in these sort of films he obviously has the constitution of a horse (perhaps it's all that outdoor living).

Friday the 13th Part 2 is really just a carbon copy of Part 1. Producer/director Steve Miner, who was Associate Producer and Production Manager on the first film, and writer Ron Kurz, have simply remade Part 1, repeating most of the key sequences almost shot for shot. And yet—surprise!—it all works. Even though I knew what was coming the film still had me on the edge of my seat. Well, no—actually it had me sinking down into my seat while I peered at the screen through my fingers, something I haven't done at a horror film since I was knee high to a jolly jumbuck (whatever that is).

It may be tacky, cheaply made and unoriginal but the basic formula, established in the first film by Sean Cunningham, is fool-proof. The remote setting, the lurking killer,

the victims remaining oblivious to what is going on even as they get picked off one by one, the final, extended chase that turns into rollercoaster ride of horror that works its effects on you even though you are fully aware of the mechanics of the ride itself. If all you're looking for in a horror film is a series of nerve-wracking jolts then I guarantee you won't be disappointed with *Friday 13th Part 2*.

But now onto the sticky question of the film's morality—and I've got to admit that the feminists will have a point when they point their accusing fingers at it and cry 'This movie exploits women!' It's the way the camera lingers over all that young female flesh—flesh that is inevitably doomed—that creates a distinctly queasy feeling (there are just as many male victims but they don't take off as many clothes beforehand). It's as if it's a kind of meat market where we're invited to lick our lips over the live product before it enters the slaughter house to be turned into hamburger... Perhaps it's not so much the exploitation of women that I find vaguely disturbing here but the way the film links violence with sex in a more obvious way than other films of this genre. It seems to be saying that you can't have one without the other...

Then again you could turn this around and claim that the film's message is a highly moral one—that naughty behaviour before marriage inevitably leads to violent death and that even taking your clothes off for reasons unconnected with the bathroom can lead to instant retribution involving the loss of limbs etc. It's a message I'm sure that Mary Whitehouse would heartily approve of.

REVIEW BY JOHN BROSNAN





Above: John Matuszak plays the leader of the tribe, Tonda. Left: Barbara Bach is his mate, the fickle Lana. Far left: The misfit tribe carries a huge dinosaur egg home to the women and children. Below: In this publicity still, Atouk (Ringo Starr) rides a dinosaur menacingly towards Lana, a scene not in the film.

The credits roll, then a title: "One Zillion BC". A pause, another title: "October 9th". The tone of **Caveman** is set.

It's a daffy comedy variation on **One Million (Years) BC** and all the other prehistoric melodramas that preceded it. **Caveman** is loose and sloppy, it's repetitious and sometimes aimless. But none of this matters, because **Caveman** is also fresh, inventive, and genuinely funny.

The plotline is the usual caveman story, which dates at least as far back as D. W. Griffith's 1919 classic, **Man's Genesis**. Ringo Starr plays Atouk, a weak but bright caveman who is tossed out of his tribe for wanting to

zug-zug Lana (Barbara Bach), the mate of huge and nasty Tonda (John Matuszak). Atouk aloonda Lana, but Lana aloonda ool and Tonda. Which translates as "Atouk loves Lana, but Lana loves food and Tonda." Co-writers Carl Gottlieb and Rudy DeLuca invented a fifteen-word language for their cavemen; there's never any problem with clarity nor any confusion.

Atouk and his friend Lar (Dennis Quaid) discover walking upright, fire, and another bunch of leaderless, misfit cavepeople (including one black and one Oriental, who tries to get everyone to speak English), who adopt Atouk as their leader. When Tonda and

his nasty bunch learn that Atouk and his friends—who also invent music one night—are getting along quite well, they steal the fire ("haraka") and the women. So Atouk makes some armour and rides a Big Horned Lizard into the fray.

The story actually doesn't matter much in **Caveman**. There is a lot of wandering back and forth from one tribe to another, and events don't progress to a climax, it just arrives. There's a side excursion to "a nearby Ice Age" which is pointless and not especially funny; the unreal sets don't mesh with the excellent Mexico location scenery. The film sometimes ambles where it should lope, the





Left: Ringo Starr gives an agreeable performance as the leader of the misfit tribe, Atouk. Above: The always attractive Shelley Long is excellent as Atouk's rejected mate, Tale. Below: Another publicity still. This time both Atouk and Lane ride the dinosaur — also not in the film.

story—but not the gags—tends to repeat itself. And it has a slightly hangdog air about it, which matches its leading man.

But it's almost endlessly clever. Within this familiar framework, Gottlieb keeps the jokes coming, and the timing is always a little different, so it's hard to predict the next one. Sometimes the gags are obvious—an egg gets boiled in a volcano, or rather poached—but the aftermaths are surprising. They cut the egg up into carpets and carry it back to the women. There's some vulgarity, involving huge pools of dinosaur dung, but it's also vigorous and not apologetic, as in the Mel Brooks films. *Caveman* is something different

and it's funny. And one of its main virtues is Ringo.

Of all the Beatles, Ringo seemed at first to be the one with the least possibility of succeeding on his own, but has probably had the widest success. This is partially due to his being genuinely sweet-natured and appealing, which comes through in his acting roles and his songs. But he's also become a very good actor, and his performance here is exactly right. Atouk is never a clown, but he's always funny. Ringo is the star of the film, but always allows others their scenes.

Barbara Bach and Shelley Long, in the equivalent roles of Martine Beswick and

Raquel Welch, are also just right. Both enter wholly into the silly but smart spirit of the film, especially Long, who is quite a find. She's not beautiful, but she's always attractive.

John Matuszak is Bluto to Ringo's Popeye, and is a good if totally blackhearted villain. Avery Schreiber makes the most of his slimy little twerp of a character; his occasional pantomime stories of what befalls the hunters are most amusing. Dennis Quaid is lively and sprightly as Atouk's best friend. I hadn't thought this generally intense young actor could play comedy so well, but like everyone else, he's fully in the spirit of the movie.



Below: Atouk (Ringo Starr) and Lene (Barbara Bach) are menaced by the tyrannosaur. Bottom: Atouk makes to swat the giant fly that is bothering his friend, Lar (Dennis Quaid).



One of the features of *Caveman* that is bound to please readers of *Starburst* is the use of the animated monsters. This is one of the first times that stop-motion animation has been used for comedy effect in a live-action story. Even *Son of Kong* had mostly serious monsters, but all the critters here, with the exception of a briefly-seen (but beautifully built) pteranodon are played for laughs and given vivid personalities. The Big Horned Lizard is curious and hungry; he's not really a foe, but regards people as interesting food. There's a lizard that bays at the moon at night and crows like a rooster at dawn.

But above all, and to my mind the star of the film other than Ringo, is a wonderful, pudgy, ageing tyrannosaur. He's nearsighted,

slightly nervous, and inclined to pant when he exerts himself. He never manages to eat even one caveman, although he keeps trying.

Jim Danforth had been hired to supervise the animation effects for *Caveman*, but a dispute with the producers (Lawrence Turman and David Foster) caused him to leave the project. Dave Allen, already working on the film, took over, supervising an effects crew of Jim Auferle (who made *Planet of the Dinosaurs*), Randy Cook, Pete Kleinow, David Stipes and Laine Liska. They all deserve a great deal of credit; they've tried something new and brought it off.

I was deeply grateful that *Caveman* is not a spoof. The film-makers aren't putting down

the old films, they're doing a comedy variation on them, with respect and affection.

Caveman is the first film directed by Carl Gottlieb, an improvisational comedy actor probably best known for his scripts for *Jaws* and *Jaws 2*. He also appeared in the first one as the news-paper editor. He has some to learn about directing movies. Many of the scenes here are rather shapeless, and begin in the middle. But he's got the comedy down pat. The jokes are sometimes obvious, but more often, as when Ringo gets rid of a fly bothering Quaid, are original (if gross). There are actually *new gags* in this picture, and that's an amazing feat in itself. *Caveman* deserves to be very popular; it's one of the few recent films I hope has a sequel.





A Starburst Jr JOE D



Joe Dante is 31, not quite young enough to be a Spielbergian wunderkind, but young enough that his talent is impressive. He grew up in Livingston, New Jersey, and haunted the local Colony Theatre. His first enchantment was with animated cartoons, but one day he stayed to see the main feature—*It Came From Outer Space*—and he was hooked. Shortly thereafter, he saw *This Island Earth*. "I remember sitting there and the sound came on, and it was outer space. Outer space! Wow! Outer space is big!" Later he stayed through a double bill of

World Without End and *Abbott and Costello Meet the Mummy* twice, and his mother called the cops.

"Around that time, another major moment in my life was the appearance of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*." The most impressive thing about *Famous Monsters* for Joe was "the knowledge, even the implicit knowledge, that somewhere out there, there must be a lot more people like me, or else they wouldn't have a magazine about them. That, and that it was written in a, shall we say, accessible reading style. I remember going to summer camp that year

and how many copies of *Famous Monsters* were ripped up by counsellors."

About the same time that Dante felt a need for worlds beyond *Famous Monsters*, he wrote a letter listing what he thought of as the 50 worst horror movies. Forrest J. Ackerman printed it as an article in issue 18, and it generated a great deal of controversy. It surprised Joe. "I could never figure out the criteria for getting your letter printed. My letters were just as stuffy and pedantic as every other little kid who was being pompous about horror movies."

Interview with JOE DANTE



Joe Dante then became a film editor for *Frankenstein*, and then, when he was never paid, he worked for the magazine for years. The magazine was Joe's idea and largely his work, edited by editor-in-chief T. Beck and writer Bob Stewart. The "Movie Guide" was an alphabetical listing, with critical comments, of virtually all movies, Chinese fiction, fantasy, and horror movies. Castle of Frankenstein was before the end of the alphabet had been enough. By that time, Joe Dante had

gone to art school, hoping to be a cartoonist.

After a couple of years, he was told that the school didn't offer a course in cartooning, so he switched to film, "although I never really entertained any ideas of making films. I just wanted to see if I could do it. And I made the usual student films that people keep locked up in their closet and never show anybody, particularly after they get into the business."

Joe began reviewing all kinds of films for the trade magazine *Film Bulletin*, concentrating on the more unusual kind. "I wrote all of their most esoteric

reviews, from 1969 to 1974. I would seek out pictures no one else had reviewed, and review them. German movies, *Satan's Sadists*, Andy Milligan movies, porno movies. I wrote some wonderful—somewhat scathing, but wonderful—reviews of strange pictures. Probably the only thing that remains of these pictures is their reviews." He also saw plenty of mainstream movies, but "the only trouble was, it was right after the rating system came in, and all the movies were pretty much worthless. But I did get to see the great *Once Upon a Time in the West* and the



uncut *Wild Bees*, and a lot of things that made it eminently worthwhile."

Then there was the *Schlitz Movie Orgy*. Joe had acquired a print of *The Phantom Creeps*, a ghastly 1930s serial starring Bela Lugosi. "I cut in some footage from other pictures, interspersed with the serial, at certain points where it looked like it would match. And it was fine, it was funny." Together with Jon Davison, Joe began stringing together "all these clips, all these pieces and junk from films," and they made a seven-hour movie. Adding scenes from notorious awful films, then public-domain titles, the film grew and changed. They began attracting attention and getting bookings in colleges. Finally representatives from the Schlitz brewing company hired Joe and Jon to go around to college campuses and show their movie collage.

"The reason I told you that convoluted and unimportant story is that when Jon Davison was called out here to California to work for Roger Corman (because Marty Scorsese had made a film, and recommended Jonathon Kaplan, and Jonathon Kaplan made a film and recommended Jon Davison), he had me come out to do trailers, because I had perfected my tiny editing style by doing this movie orgy."

Joe's first trailer for Corman was for Jonathon Demme's *Caged Heat*, and he had to put it together without any help. But he got through this hard time, the film made money, and he stayed on. He did the trailer for *Candy Striped Nurses*, which led to his becoming the first trailer department that New World Pictures had. Together with Allen Arkush, Joe did trailers for *Big Bad Mama*, *The Last Days of Men on Earth (The Final Programme)* and *Amarcord*, among many other films.

When he and Arkush cut a trailer for *TNT Jackson* ("she'll put you in traction"), he suddenly realized, "Jesus Christ, this movie is just the pits. We can do a better movie than that." So he got together with Davison and Arkush, and approached Corman about making a movie. He said they could do it if it was the cheapest picture New World made. Dante and Arkush had been dropping the same shot of an exploding helicopter into many trailers, some times when the film didn't even have helicopters in it, just to increase the excitement. "So using that principle, we wondered 'why don't we put a movie together around all the footage Roger's got.' We were very familiar with the library. Also I had seen all of Roger's movies while I was in school. He was one of my favourite directors. So we decided we would make a picture about a movie company that was making a bunch of different movies, so we could use all the stock footage for action. We didn't have enough



Top: Phil Tipper's little breeze from *Piranha*, inserted into the film at the last minute. Centre: A puppet *Piranha* gets to grips with an unwary swimmer. Above: The infamous Dick Miller, who has appeared in all of Joe Dante's films to date. Preceding spread, centre and below: Two scenes from Joe Dante's first feature film, *Hollywood Boulevard*. Left to right: Two scenes from *Piranha*.

money for action. We were lucky if we had enough for actors."

The film that resulted was *Hollywood Boulevard*, a screwy homage to and parody of Roger Corman and his New World pictures. Among other bizarre elements, it featured a Merio Beve inspired chase through a smoky night, Robby the Robot, Forry Ackerman, and the wedding of Godzilla. Furthermore, Dick Miller was hired to play Walter Paisley.

Dick Miller is one of the best character stars in the business. He's not usually used as a character actor,

since he generally plays pretty much the same hostile, smart-mouthed sherp. He was the lead actor in Corman's *Bucket of Blood* (as Walter Paisley) and *Wer of the Satellites*, but generally has had smaller roles; Corman used him frequently, and his bit in *Not of This Earth* (as the salesman) is a standout. Miller has appeared in all three of Dante's films so far, twice as Walter Paisley—although these latter-day Paisleys aren't much like the sad, would-be beetnik of that film. "How many people," asks Joe Dante, "get to work with some of their most revered figures, Dick



Top: A school of ferocious piranha fish attacks a group of unwary bathers in the Joe Dante film, *Piranha*. Centre: Keenan Wynn passes the time fishing in the deceptively calm waters, feet splashing idly in the lake. Above: However, bathing one's feet can have rather dire consequences!

Miller, Robby the Robot and Godzilla?"

"What we basically learned on that film was nothing about making a picture. What we learned was how to cut. Even though we only had ten days, we ended up with a two-hour rough cut. I discovered the secret of New World pictures, which was to shoot as much material as possible, so you'll have room to take out the really, really terrible stuff."

During the production of *Hollywood Boulevard*, Jon Davison, who was producing, had told Joe and Allan Arkush that he had an awful secret for them.

After Corman saw the film, Jon breathed a sigh of relief. "He's going to release the film after all!" Initially, Corman had intended to simply write the picture off, thinking (according to Joe Dante), "this will make the boys happy, and they'll get some experience, then go back to editing trailers." But Corman liked the movie and released it, although it did not get wide distribution. "It went out," says Joe, "and proceeded to completely drop dead." And for a while, Joe went back to editing trailers.

I interviewed Joe in his office in Hollywood in

mid-April; we've known each other for six years, and the conversation was relaxed and friendly. The following interview is culled from 50 pages of questions and answers.

Starburst: Did *Hollywood Boulevard* lead directly to *Piranha*?

Joe Dante: No, it led directly to total obscurity. Allan and I went back and did more trailers. Car crash movies came along, and I ended up cutting *Grand Theft Auto*, which was Ron Howard's first picture as a director. I'd cut my own feature, with Allan and Amy Jones, but I wanted to know if I could cut someone else's picture. I wanted to learn what you needed to know to do that. It was a very educational experience, because it was all these car crashes. It had a rough cut that was three hours long, and had to be reduced to 85 minutes.

This was back when Roger was taking films to Preview House, which is a place where people sit and turn dials to indicate their reaction to the picture. It's a place that tests tv pilots. They run a cartoon, the people react to the cartoon, and they can gauge their little graphs and things. This is not a process I believe in, but Roger was getting a deal with these people. Part of the deal was that it wasn't a demographic audience, it was just people off the street. The only way it can work is if you keep it limited to the audience you think might go the movie. *Grand Theft Auto's* audience was between 12 and 25. That was the key audience. But everybody in the audience at these showings was geriatric. People from Honolulu, people from Tulsa with cameras around their necks, who just happened to be taken off the street.

Nonetheless, Roger would pore over these graphs as if they were holy scripture. He would look over the graphs for the dips where the line would go to, and he'd say "we have to cut there." I would explain, "Roger, this is the plot, they need to know this to understand what is going on." "No-no-no, you don't understand, it's not that kind of movie, it's a car crash movie. It doesn't matter." Ron Howard is pulling his hair out. "It's my movie! My first movie!" Ron's father Rance had written it, and was fairly protective of the script, which was a problem. But the biggest problem was Roger going to Preview House.

Later he took *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, which is about an insane asylum, to Preview House, and he got very low scores. He didn't understand why. It turned out later that the people at a local mental home would take the patients to Preview House for outings, because they would get to play with the dials. The last thing they wanted to see on their outing was a picture about a mental institution. They would all turn their dials down. Roger couldn't understand why this picture wasn't



going over.

After *Grand Theft Auto*, there was a project called *Rock 'n' Roll High School*, which Allan Arkush wanted to do. I was offered *Piranha*, but I didn't want to do that.

Why didn't you want to direct *Piranha*?

It was two years after *Jaws*. *Jaws 2* was going to be made at the time. That was going to be expensive and big, and Roger was going to make the movie cheaply. Allen and I had written the original story of *Rock 'n' Roll High School*, and he'd directed some insert scenes for another film. He really wanted to do the high school movie, so I ended up with *Piranha*. That had the benefit of being a co-operation with United Artists, so there was a little more money. Initially, I had an incredibly poor script about mutant catfishes. Catfish and piranhas had interbred. It starts out with them being delivered somewhere in a truck, and lightning strikes this truck, making it roll into a reservoir. Now these flesh-eating catfish will kill anybody that goes into the water. The original writer of the script couldn't figure out any way to get these people into the water once they knew there were horrible fish there, so he invented a bear that chased people into the water. After he got tired of the bear, he invented a forest fire that chased the whole cast into the water. It was godawful, it was a terrible idea, and was never going to work.

In my efforts to end up with something I could care about, I made it more and more ambitious. I kept adding science fiction to it, to make it more of a fantasy. John Sayles was brought in as writer, more proof of Roger's great record for finding talented people. We got along real well, and he agreed to rewrite the picture. John added science fiction and a mad doctor, and tried to make it a kind of 50s movie formula parody. Opened with a "No Trespassing" sign, which is also a *Citizen Kane* thing, so you get to do two things at once, schlock and quality. Roger wanted two climaxes in the picture, so we added a resort to John's summer camp. Neither John nor I liked that idea particularly, but we did realize that we could kill off all the kids in the summer camp because that was the one thing the audience wouldn't expect us to do, especially after setting them up for five reels.

Was Kevin McCarthy's name (Dr Robert Hoek) a reference?

I believe that a number of names are references to baseball players; Sayles is a baseball fan. But it's not a reference to Bob Hope. I like him too much to make him a mad doctor.

Bradford Dillman was better in *Piranha* than he is in most things. He's usually kind of slick.

Frenkly, if we hadn't cast all the people we did, I'm



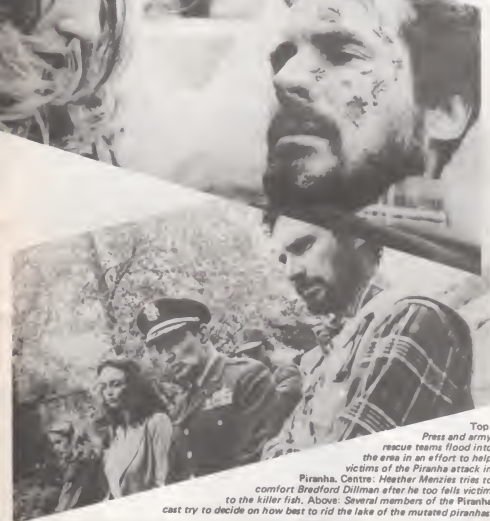
Top: Kevin McCarthy, Bradford Dillman and Heather Menzies take refuge on a raft in *Piranha*. Centre: Bruce Gordon and Dick Miller discuss the consequences of the *Piranha* school on the holiday trade. Above: Keith McCarthy plays an embittered scientist who develops a mutant strain of killer fish.

sure the film wouldn't have worked as well because with the incredible pressures under which it was made, we needed people who knew what to do, who could match their actions. Dillman was excellent in that picture and we were happy to have him. Here he's not slick, he's kind of rough and gruff, and he's an alcoholic. It's one of the better parts he's had lately. I really liked him. I'm glad to say that I'm sure he thought it was going to be a rotten movie, but he saw it in San Francisco and sent me a letter that he was amazed how good it was. He thought it was a lot

better than *The Swarm*. **What about Barbara Steele?**

She played a part which was originally written for a man, but we wanted to have her in the picture so we gave her a couple of extra scenes. She was not real easy to work with, not as easy as I had hoped, but in the end she was fine. When you work for Fellini, then you work for Joe Dante, let's face it, it's not quite the same. But luckily she'd also worked for Antonio Margheri, so I didn't feel that bad.

What was the biggest problem?



Top: Press and army rescue teams flood into the area in an effort to help victims of the Piranha attack in Piranha. Centre: Heather Menzies tries to comfort Bredford Dillman after he too falls victim to the killer fish. Above: Several members of the Piranha cast try to decide on how best to rid the lake of the mutated piranhas.

The basic problem was with the special effects; we had no idea how we were going to do them when we started the picture. We were originally going to use real piranhas, but the people at the Oceanarium took a dim view of our cutting their lips away so you could see the teeth. Otherwise you can't see them, and the fish don't look all that frightening. In reality, they aren't all that vicious. They are basically cowardly, and won't attack anything unless there's a huge drove of them.

I read recently that there has never been a recorded

human death by piranha. Apparently not. It's basically a movie convention. We watched a lot of films, and never saw a piranha attack convincingly portrayed. Most movie people shy'd away from it; they'd just have people flailing around on top of the water and that'd be it. We used puppet heads designed by Jon Berg and Phil Tippett. We shot them at eight frames a second, adding in prosthetic limbs and things, which was actually very convincing. The only problem was that we could never get a decent wide angle shot. Pater Kuran did

some stuff on a stage that we ended up using, but frankly it doesn't work. I would rather have cut out all those shots, but unfortunately for story purposes, we needed them. I imagine cel animation would have worked, but we had only \$50,000 to spend on special effects, and considering that it's remarkably good. *The various noters in the lab at the beginning...* Those were not in the script. We had Phil Tippett working for us. We'd seen his work in *Star Wars*, and we said we'd be crazy not to use this guy, so we invented the whole laboratory scene just so we could have this little creature running around. There was some resistance to doing these things, because they put the picture in a whole different category: it wasn't a suspense movie anymore now, it was a fantasy. But that's why we put it in, and I remember at the sneak preview the audience reacting very positively to the critter.

We spent a lot of time and a lot of money on experiments and things that didn't work in *Piranha*, and frankly it's a miracle that the picture turned out to be as good as it is.

Why do you think science fiction novels aren't filmed?

Because they never have been. Most producers can't read. Why were *Uncle Scrooge* comics so good and Donald Duck cartoons so simplistic? Because producers are happier with simpler concepts. Movies are a different medium, and books can be more intellectual. *The Man Who Fell to Earth* is an exception. It's a little tricky to find a studio willing to do a science fiction movie like that with much depth, that makes you do that much thinking while you're watching. It's not that it's that great a story, that's not what's good about the movie. What's good is the depth and the amount of the material that's in the movie. I'd like to make a film like that, that would be great. But to find someone with enough faith in you to let you make that kind of material, which is not accessible to world theatre audiences, is difficult. It's very difficult to get science fiction and horror movies out of the exploitation mold. Pictures like *Logan's Run* don't help. That is somebody's idea of a quality science fiction movie, and *The Man Who Fell to Earth* is somebody's idea of a different kind of art movie. I think true science fiction is closer to art movies than to Saul David movies.

Next: Projects die aborning, and *The Howling*.

A Starburst Interview

"Whatever happens, we shall be criticised, of course," says Vera Lorrimer. "The fans loved the Liberator and the cast. But we hope they'll like the new people too."

Before *Blake's 7*, Vera Lorrimer had never directed a fantasy series. "I was wedded to police series," he says. "I did twelve years of *Dixon of Dock Green* and umpteen *Z-Cars* and *Softly, Softly*." The BBC Programme Planning Department originally thought of *Blake's 7* as cops-and-robbers in outer space, so is that how Lorrimer sees it? Not exactly. "It always seemed to me," he says, "that Blake was a Robin Hood figure, Gan was Little John and so on."

In 1980, when the third series of *Blake's 7* finished shooting, everyone involved thought it would be the last series. But, when the final episode was transmitted and the Liberator had been destroyed, over the end-credits came the disembodied voice of a continuity announcer saying there would be "a new series next year". It came as a surprise to producer David Maloney (interviewed in *Starburst 18*), to Paul Darrow (*Starburst 18 & 20*), Jacqueline Pearce (*Starburst 32*) and the rest of the cast. Everybody—well, almost everybody—was happy to continue with the show. David Maloney certainly was. But he was already scheduled as producer of the new series of *When the Boat Comes In*. It soon became clear that production of *When the Boat Comes In* was going to continue long past the start of pre-production on the new *Blake's 7* series. To complicate matters further, Maloney was also given the go-ahead to produce the BBC's much-delayed *Day of the Triffids*, a story he had longed to make and which would also overlap with the shooting of *Blake's 7*. So Maloney recommended Vera Lorrimer as new *Blake* producer—Lorrimer had directed twelve episodes of *Blake's 7* over the first three seasons and, although he retired as a BBC staff director in June 1980, had worked for Maloney as a freelance director on *When the Boat Comes In*. By that complicated path, a new producer and a new series format were born.

At the end of the third series, the Liberator was destroyed completely, so major alterations were inevitable. "The new storyline," says Lorrimer, "is that the crew are on Terminal, where they were before: a most inhospitable planet which now appears to be covered in snow. Things look very black indeed. Then a guy arrives called Dorian—he's a take-off of Dorian Gray—and he has a ship called the Scorpio."

On previous series, the Liberator bridge set had proved cumbersome to use and to store. In fact, David Maloney had intended to get rid of it at the end of the first season, but then decided to keep it when it proved popular with the fans. The new Scorpio is much smaller mainly because it is easier to assemble, shoot and store but also, partly, because of the appearance of the *Battlestar Galactica* series on British tv screens. "They've got spaceships the size of the Queen Mary," says Lorrimer, "so I thought I would take a leaf out of *Alien's* book and have something that is rather more grotty, more metallic. We had terrible trouble before because the Liberator set was all wood. Every time the crew walked anywhere, we had to put music on to stop this wooden clumping sound. We're making this new one of metal so it will sound metallic."

The Scorpio is described in the script as an interstellar cargo ship: "a Wanderer Mark II—obsolete, but functional". The reason for giving the *Blake* crew an obsolete ship is to make it less easy for them to escape from their enemies. "All they had to do before was step on the gas," says Lorrimer. "Now they have to use their brains. They don't have the technology to escape from the Federation."

The crew, stranded on the planet Terminal, are rescued by the new character Dorian, who has programmed the Scorpio to fly to a far-distant planet



called Zenon which, Lorrimer hopes, will provide more flexibility. "What we had before," he says, "was the crew living permanently on the Liberator which, from a director's point of view, was rather trying because we had miles and miles of chat on that rather difficult-to-shoot ship." The new location allows the use of three principal sets: the flight-deck of Scorpio and two underground sets on Zenon (the crew room and the operations room). "We'll be able to sit around and genuinely eat, drink and presumably go to the loo," says Lorrimer. "Nobody could ever do that on the Liberator. Now they can sit around in this crew

room, relax and talk; they can go into the base operations and plan what they're going to do; they can go up by jump-jet into the Scorpio and then up and away into the stars and do their action bits."

Quite a few changes to the physical look of the series, then. But what about the cast? "In the general collapse of the Federation," explains Lorrimer, "Servana was able to become a forgotten, lost woman. She's believed to have been killed in some battle. In fact, she has managed to become a security chief known as Chief Commissioner Smeer—a mixture of 'sly' and 'sneer'. She realises our heroes know who



with VERE LORRIMER



she really is. So she's very anxious to find them and liquidate them—because it is not going to look good if it becomes known she was Sarvalian, who had miserably failed to liquidate them for three whole series. So she has a motive.

"So does Avon. He realises he can no longer run because they don't have the technology to escape the Federation. They must stand and fight. So the plan is to stockpile professors with wonderful ideas for secret weapons and then, in the last episode, we can mount an attack on Earth."

One of the trade-marks of *Blake's 7* has been

constant change: in particular, the disappearance of central characters. Until the new series, the most dramatic exit was probably Gen's. He was killed off halfway through the second season because the BBC departmental head in over-all charge of *Blake's 7* thought the heroes were too invulnerable. He complained no hero ever bit the dust and it was all getting a bit monotonous. So David Jackson, who played Gen, was approached "because he was the biggest target and filled up the widest chunk of screen". He said he didn't mind being written out, so he was killed off. Sally Knyvette, who played Jenna,

left at the end of the second season to go to university. And Blake himself (Garth Thomas) left at the same time because he'd been offered a good job with the Royal Shakespeare Company and feared his image as a serious actor might get dented if he stayed on and on with the series. "Blake came to sticky end," says Vere Lorrimer, "but we've left him in a sort of mystery situation. He's around somewhere in the galaxy and we drop in references to him occasionally. He might, indeed, re-appear."

Another central 'character' to disappear was the computer Zen, who was destroyed in the third series. The crew's second 'brain' Orac remains because Vila carried it off the wrecked *Liberator* and, in the new series, Orac will be joined by a new shipboard computer which has a head, neck and shoulders design disguised by the fact it hangs upside-down from the ceiling. When the computer speaks, it will be accompanied by a mechanical clicking noise to add to the over-all metallic feel of the ship. So another new "character" joins the regular team. And one disappears: Cally is to be killed off.

"Jan left us," says Vere Lorrimer, "because she has a two-year-old son and didn't want to spend another nine months searching for baby-sitters. She felt she'd like to give more time to her little boy, so she's conveniently killed off in an explosion in the first episode and her last words are *Blake... Blake!* Then, in due course, we meet Dorian's sidekick Soolin, who's a glamorous blonde gunfighter."

Soolin is played by Glynis Barber, who has mainly theatrical experience and who first came to Vere Lorrimer's attention when she auditioned for a role in *When the Boat Comes In*. The Soolin character was created by script editor Chris Boucher but, as with all major changes, it had to be okayed by Terry Nation (interviewed in *Starburst* 6). He originated the *Blake's 7* series as well as Doctor *Who's* enemies the Daleks and he now lives in the North Hollywood Hills, working in a large caravan on the old Warner Bros. lot. He has script approval on *Blake's 7* and synopses of all episodes are sent to him before production.

Minor changes do not need to be approved. With the old *Liberator* and its accessories destroyed, new guns and new teleport bracelets have been designed. Lorrimer says, "The old bracelets were very pretty brown and mauve things but, every time they fell on the floor, they bounced because they were made of plastic. These new ones are made of 'titanium' and fall with a loud clatter. I hope it will sell go with the solid metal feel we have in this new ship."

The *Liberator* hand-guns have been re-designed because they too caused problems on previous series. The old guns were made of perspex so broke easily; they "fired" by having a rather undramatic light-bulb illuminate the end and they were fastened with a rather awkward wire. The new guns, says Lorrimer, are more "substantial". They are metallic and go off with a bang. Supposedly made of "argantium", they are recoil-less and can fire under water. They have a guide-sight mounted on the top and their magazine-clips are colour-coded to indicate the projectile used. The standard black clip indicates that the gun is armed to fire small but deadly plasma-



Top left: Producer Vere Lorrimer poses with a design sketch for the fourth season of *Blake's 7*. Far left: One of the new teleport bracelets designed specifically for the fourth season. Centre: Michael Keating clowns with Glynis Barber and Joette Simon. Left: Another redesigned piece of *Blake's 7* hardware. Gone are the old perspex tube blasters. The crew now use these metal hand-guns. Top: Visual effects supervisors Jim Francis and Andy Lazell with the *Scorpio*. Above: The crew of the *Scorpio*, (left to right) Dayne (Joette Simon), Terrant (Steve Pacey), Avon (Paul Darrow), Vila (Michael Keating), Soolin (Glynis Barber).

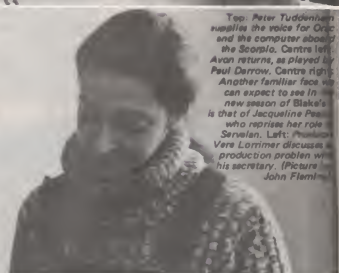
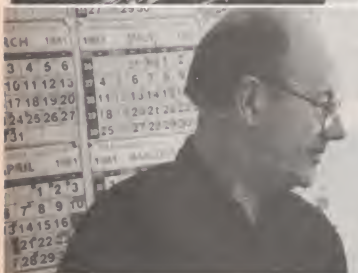
bolts; other missiles include percussion shells, micro-grenades plus stun and drug weapons. This means that fewer laser rays will be seen on the screen, a big relief to everyone concerned.

Adding laser rays to television picture is a very complicated business, consuming a lot of time and therefore money to achieve a few split-seconds of screen time (see interview with A.J. Mitchell in *Starburst 30*). As Vere Lorrimer says: "Something that actually goes BANG! and fires a flame and a shot is better than putting these wretched lasers on. They look as though they've gone from gun to body if people take a steady aim and fire and you line them up very carefully. But actors inevitably tend to wave their hands about. They sometimes end up not pointing the gun in exactly the right way and sometimes you get bent lasers." So expect to see fewer lasers in the new series. But look out for new opening credits and new music.



Composer Dudley Simpson has re-scored the opening theme with a hard, driving beat so that, says Lorrimer, "You will be able to sing it. I've written some words to it and turned it into a pop song. We hope we'll be able to get somebody to record it. After all, the old theme was recorded by several people like Geoff Love". At any rate, over this re-scored theme will appear graphic designer Doug Burd's new credit sequence, shot as if the viewer is in a spaceship flying at tremendous speed over the surface of a moonscape. At the climax of the music, the ship takes off into space and an instrument panel appears with constantly-changing visual displays and the title ... **Blake's 7**.

Lorrimer hopes the ever-changing display will be like the new series itself: "A fascinator. You'll be able to see a little more each time you see it". Whatever happens, the programme should be worth watching—if only to see who gets killed next. ●



Top: Peter Tuddenham supplies the voice for Orac and the computer aboard the *Scorpio*. Centre left: Ayton returns, as played by Paul Darrow. Centre right: Another familiar face who can expect to see in the new season of *Blake's 7* is that of Jacqueline Pearson who reprises her role as Serellan. Left: Producer Vere Lorrimer discusses a production problem with his secretary. (Picture by John Fleming)

OBITUARY

Since this interview took place, BBC graphics designer Douglas Burd has been killed in a tragic flying accident.

Burd was only 29 when he died. He joined BBC Television's graphics and design department in May 1972 and won

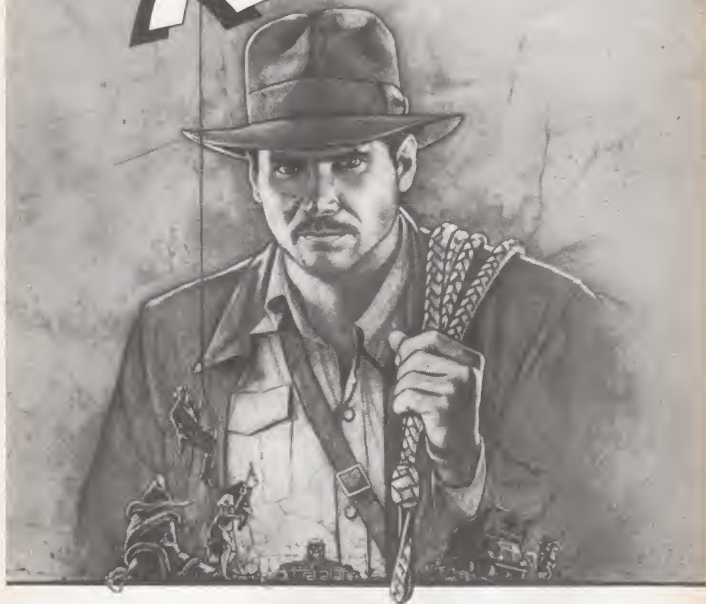
the British Academy of Film & Television Arts' prestigious Design & Art Director Award for his work on the 1979 production of John Le Carré's *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*. Burd has been nominated for the award again this year, in recognition of his outstanding work on the television

version of *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

At the time of his death, he was working not only on the new series of *Blake's 7* but also on the upcoming BBC tv production of *The Day of the Triffids* (to be featured in a future issue of *Starburst*).

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RAIDERS of the LOST ARK



Top: Indiana Jones (Harrison Ford) boards the Nazi submarine in an effort to save Marion Ravenwood (Karen Allen) and the Ark. Centre left: Marion is captured by the French archaeologist, Belloc (Paul Freeman) and his Nazi master, Dietrich (Wolf Kahler). Centre right: Indiana and Marion. Above left: Harrison Ford plays archaeologist/adventurer Indiana Jones. Above right: Indiana seizes a horse to give pursuit to the Nazis who have captured the Ark. Opposite: Indiana clammers into the secret chamber where the Ark is concealed. Opposite top: Indiana and Marion are tied to a stake during the breathtaking finale of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Opposite below: Indiana comes face to face with... a snake!

This month *Starburst* presents a special photo-preview of the new film from the combined talents of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg. The movie has opened to tremendous business in America and looks set to repeat its success in Britain. *Raiders of the Lost Ark* contains all the fast-paced action that made *Star Wars* such a stupendous hit only four years ago. John Brosnan's review will follow next issue.



A STARBURST INTERVIEW WITH JOHN CARPENTER

A new John Carpenter movie is always a cause for celebration. And for another conversation with the brightest of the new, young Hollywood fantasy/magic makers. Tony Crawley, our man about town—every town—first covered Carpenter as far back as *Starburst 5*, regarding *Dark Star*... and again for his *Carpenter File* in *Starburst 22*, at which time his future projects were *The Prometheus Crisis*, *El Diablo* and *The Thing* re-make. Suddenly, he's out and about with *Escape from New York* instead... Time to get Carpenter and Crawley together again. To check up on the surprise new film and spin back from *The Fog* all the way to his 8mm childhood in Bowling Green, Kentucky... with some welcome interruptions from Mrs C, Adrienne Barbeau.



...New York riot in the streets. Below, left to right: Snake, an ex-con whose job it is to get the hell out of New York; Hawk, a New York State Prison convict; Ernest Borgnine is cast as a cab driver who still lives in the back streets of Manhattan; Lee Van Cleef portrays Hawk, the man who recruits Snake; Frank Doubleday is Romero, the peevish hood of henchman of Duke; Adrienne Barbeau plays Maggie, a woman inmate of the prison.



AN INTRODUCTION BY BILL WARREN



Director John Carpenter.

John Carpenter is generally acknowledged to be one of the best young directors working today. His *Halloween* was the largest-crossing low-budget film ever made and inspired dozens of imitations; *The Fog* was not as popular or influential, but showed an advance in Carpenter's directorial abilities. And his newest film, *Escape from New York*, is one of the most eagerly-awaited movies of 1981.

Carpenter is one of the University of Southern California movie crowd that includes George Lucas, John Milius, Gary Kurtz, Randall Kleiser, Ron Glot and many others. While still at USC, Carpenter participated in making *The Resurrection of Brinco Billy*, which won an Oscar as best live-action short subject. With Dan O'Bannon, he wrote

and then directed *Dark Star*, a student film that slowly grew into a feature, and became a cult favourite.

For television, Carpenter wrote *Zuma Beach*, and directed both *Elvis!* which starred Kurt Russell, and *Someone Is Watching Me*, which co-starred Adrienne Barbeau. Both Russell and Barbeau star *Escape from New York*. Carpenter also wrote the theatrical feature *The Eyes of Laura Mars*, but that was directed by Irvin Kershner.

Between *Dark Star* and *Halloween*, Carpenter directed the overly-stylized *Assault on Precinct 13*, which was favourably received in Europe, but which died at the box office in the United States. One of Carpenter's favourite directors is the late Howard Hawks, and he deliberately gave *Assault*

on *Precinct 13* a Hawksian feel, but the content and style worked against each other. The script was unrealistic.

This indicates Carpenter's main weakness as a film maker. While he is unquestionably talented as a director, his scripting abilities leave something to be desired. *Halloween* and *The Fog* both depend on implausible plot contrivances, on many characters acting like idiots, and on extraneous material added solely for scare value. His major deficiency is in logic. He has not yet understood that fantasy and horror movies demand more stringent logic than other films, that fantasy is not license for any kind of story turn. While his movies engage the audience emotionally, they fail to do so on an intellectual level. You can enjoy his pictures as exercises in style, but after seeing them, all the logical flaws creep into your mind.

Escape from New York, which Carpenter co-wrote with Nick Castle (the killer in *Halloween*), is a distinct improvement as a script, although it is somewhat absurd. To accept that the United States would take everyone out of Manhattan to make room for three million prisoners requires quite a leap of imagination. But it's an intriguing situation, and most of its ramifications are dealt with briskly in the script, although we get only the barest glimpse of the rest of this future America. *Escape from New York* is more tightly-written than Carpenter's earlier pictures, and that bodes well. Rumour has it that Carpenter is not entirely satisfied with the finished movie, but it's still a step in the right direction for him. It's not a horror film, and it's more logical. Carpenter is expanding what he can do.

He's still slated to direct the remake of *The Thing*, which could pose some interesting problems for him. The original, of course, was produced (and, in fact, directed) by Howard Hawks, so this time he's going to be cautious about Hawksian imagery. Even though the script of the new version incorporates the shape-changing abilities of the alien from John W. Campbell's short novel, which were dropped from the Hawks version.

There will be more on *The Thing* and other future projects in Part II of this interview, next month.





Above: John Carpenter and Lee Van Cleef on the set of *Escape from New York*. Far right: A prison taken over on the streets of New York prison. Right: Kurt Russell plays Snake, an ex-con who must get the President safely out of Manhattan.



"Well, it is science fiction. But, let's look at it this way. 1997 is sixteen years in the future . . . Go back sixteen years and we're talking about 1965. We all know the changes from 1965 until now. They're not that profound. We're not flying around in spaceships and using ray-guns. So I'm doing the same thing—*Escape* is not *that* futuristic. But it is somewhat futuristic.

John Carpenter is talking about his new movie. His most expensive film to date, *Escape from New York* weighs in at \$7.5 million.

"It's expensive, not because I think it's time to do a big movie, but because the movie itself is that big. It's a high adventure film. In the future. And it resembles *Assault on Precinct 13* more than any of my other films. In the sense that it's a big action film . . . you know what I'm saying."

Indeed, we do. It's big in all areas. Not merely budget, crew, action and effects, but stars, as well. It's Carpenter's biggest all-star number so far. Kurt Russell tops the list featuring seasoned heavies like Lee Van Cleef, Ernie Borgnine, Donald Pleasance, Harry Dean Stanton, Isaac Hayes (the *Shaft* music man, remember?), plus Russell's wife, Season Hubley, and Carpenter's too, Adrienne Barbeau.

Ironically for a movie set in New York, shooting only reached there—for a wrap-up all-night location at the Statue of Liberty—after a dozen weeks in Atlanta, St. Louis and inevitably, Los Angeles, where Carpenter also edited and scored the film. The special effects were carried out there, too, at the Venice facility of Roger Corman. Total bill: \$7.5 million. *The Fog* came in for a mere \$1.5 million.

ROOTS

There were three cinemas in Bowling Green, Kentucky where John Carpenter was born (and married, on New Year's Day, 1979). These picture parlours, indoor and out, were his first film school, long before going, like Lucas, to the University of Southern California. The debt is acknowledged still today with his film scores being played by the loftily-named Bowling Green Symphony Orchestra, or cut in numbers for *The Fog* as The Bowling Green Warren

County Chamber Orchestra... I

He spent many hours in those cinemas. All the more so after a trip to Rochester, in upstate New York, when his mother took him to a movie he's never forgotten and continually sets out to match in impact... end does!

"The reason I wanted to be a director all goes back to when I was five years old. In 1953, I went to see a movie called *It Came from Outer Space*, (also an inspiration for fellow director Joe Dante, see page 20). In 3D. Remember those films... with the glasses and everything? The first sequence has a meteor coming down out of the sky. A fireball that comes right out of the screen, right into your face and blows up. *Explodes!*"

"I was five years old, sitting there in the theatre watching end, well, I jumped out of my seat, screamed and ran up the aisles. Then, all of a sudden, realised I wasn't frightened. I was *thrilled beyond belief!*"

"And I thought to myself: I wanna do that to people. I want to create that kind of excitement. So I came back to my seat, sat back down and watched the rest of the film. From then on, I wanted to be a movie director. I wanted to do films that would make you jump. Get something going in you..."

"From 1953 on, I saw almost everything that was released. Just everything I could get in and see. I still haven't gotten over seeing *Forbidden Planet* (1956) for the first time... I saw all the other 3D films. *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954), *Bwana Devil* (1952). Ever see those...? Weren't they great? And *Hondo* (1953)... *Dial M for Murder* (1954)... which has been out again in the United States in 3D again. Only some of it really uses 3D. Basically, what he did was just use relief. The scissors is big scene! But it's a very theatrical piece, a lot of talking. Not my favourite Hitchcock."

ROUTES

John Carpenter started making movies as a kid, messing around with an 8mm camera. It belonged to his dad, Howard Carpenter, and served the fledgling film-maker well enough until he could afford his own Eumig 650. Spielberg's favourite of his own early efforts was *Firelight*. About, what else, but strange lights in the skies. Carpenter was more concerned with positive action on *terra firma*. He remembers them well. His first, he says, was *Revenge of the Colossal Beast*, stuffed full of aliens, spacecraft, which prove, in a neat finale, to be from Earth. *Gorgo*



EYES OF LAURA MARS

Starburst: Any last words, John, before we bury Laura Mars, particularly as some people out there still hold rights to your other scripts and God alone knows what foul deeds they may perpetrate upon them...?

John Carpenter: What can I tell you? A terse comment would be: The original could have been tremendously cinematic. It was, simply, the idea of seeing through someone else's eyes. Very simple, the movie didn't work. As you may know it was re-written by... oh, by everyone! Even the basic idea is not done the way I had it. My title was *Eyes*,

period. The fashion photographer was particularly my idea, and the idea she could see through the eyes of someone else. But the rest of it, you can just forget about.

Are you worried about the fate of the other scripts on corporate shelves, going through similar committee re-writes?

There's some out there, yes... which might leap upon us at any moment. They usually get re-written and so, it really depends on who does them. I would look to the director always. If you respect his work, it might be something to go see. But don't just go to see it because my name is on the script. Or was.

SOMEONE'S WATCHING ME

John Carpenter made much of *Eyes of Laura Mars*, the way it should have been handled (with, in particular, the heroine *not* knowing the killer) in his rivetting tv movie, *Someone's Watching Me* (1978) with the wondrous Lauren Hutton. The film also introduced him to the actress who is now his wife, Adrienne Barbeau, star of *Grease* off Broadway, and the *Maude* tv series.

Adrienne: I think he had seen me in *Maude* and wrote the role with me in mind—is that true? [*She looks across at him; he nods*]. I thought it was one of the finest scripts I'd read, especially for television—the sixth tv movie I'd made. So I went it end met him and thought he was an extremely good-looking man but we were both in love...

John: Actually, she thought I was gay!
Adrienne: I did, I thought he was gay.

What little tulle number was he wearing at the time?

Adrienne: Well, he didn't have the strongest handshake in the world. [*Laughs*]. Then, because the character I played was and some references were made to that I misunderstood what he was saying. First day of work, I found out he had a lady friend. So we never acknowledged our attraction to each other the entire time we were working. At the end of the film, he asked me out to dinner and said something he wanted to discuss. I thought he was writing a new script. Instead of that he told me he had fallen in love with me... end we went from there.



vs *Godzilla* used clay figurines. Terror from Space was a kind of af Western, with certain echoes, of course, of *It Came from Outer Space* . . .

Most of these films were made when he was fourteen, just before forming his own company, Emerald Productions. Nothing like starting early! He spent all the money he could raise on new equipment, including his own rear-projection screen for stop-motion experiments. These fitted into what he has called his first really promising movie, *Warrior and the Demon*. And this youthful period ended, or so he thinks with *Gorgon, The Space Monster* . . .

The Thing, it seems, will not be a re-make of Howard Hawks alone . . .

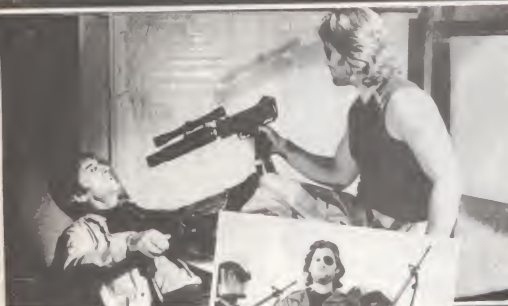
After going through a period of producing a fanzine, *Fantastic Films Illustrated*, hand-written, drawn, coloured, and printed on a mimeograph machine by himself, Carpenter studied at the film school of the University of Southern California. He turned out upwards of fifteen student films, plainly his own man even then.

"In the '60s, there was a great pressure to make on us to make the personal statement. To copy Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, Francois Truffaut and their art films about intellectual pain and the sort of depressive state of life. I guess they were neo-realist films, as much as we could do that in America. Which is just . . . or . . . not my style.

But all of a sudden, everyone else there was making films like that. It was the vogue, simply the style. Which I *hated*! I was always committed to Hollywood movies. I'd grown up on them. I thought, 'Why make European films because we can't make them as well as the Europeans—let's make Hollywood films.' It was the time, though, when there was a snobbery in film schools against Hollywood movies. By that, I mean the pure entertainment films, the genre movies, the Westerns and so on, you know what I'm saying?

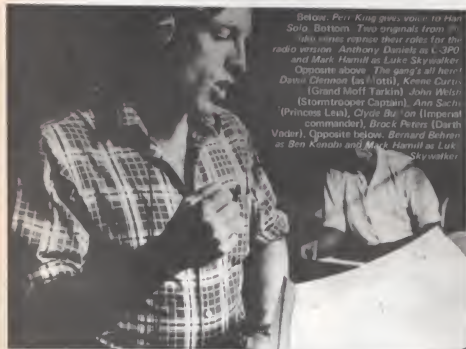
"But it wasn't any good to make those. Yet the way I grew up almost every film was a genre film. They still are. *Kramer vs Kramer* is a genre film just as much as *All That Jazz* is a genre film."

So what of the future? While we anxiously await the British opening of *Escape from New York* (October, by Jimmy!) Carpenter is busy. He's still slated to direct the remake of the old Howard Hawks sf shocker *The Thing* (from *Another World*). About which, more next month. Plus John Carpenter on *Halloween II*, other people's movies and word or two from Mrs Carpenter about her director husband. Be here!



STAR WARS ON RADIO

Feature by Tony Crawley



Below: Peter King gives voice to Han Solo. Bottom: Two originals from the radio series reprise their roles for the radio version. Anthony Daniels as C-3PO and Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker. Opposite above: The gang's all here! David Glenister (as Motti), Kewee Curtis (Grand Moff Tarkin), John Welsh (Stormtrooper Captain), Ann Sachs (Princess Leia), Clyde Butts (Imperial commander), Brock Peters (Darth Vader). Opposite below: Bernard Behren as Ben Kenobi and Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker.



"Another galaxy, another time... And now, another medium. *Star Wars* rides again. On good, old-fashioned steam radio.

The thirteen-episode serial is due for a rapid, Hitch-Hiker's Guide style repeat during summer's Saturdays. And this time, folks, it's in stereo! Starting from July 4, which just happens to be American Independence Day.

In stereo you really get the message, the full, powerhouse force of not only John Williams' original score, but Ben Burtt's movie sound-effects. "They're stunning," says Anthony Daniels, aka Threepio. "You can sit at home and have the whole galaxy whizzing around your head."

Well, of course, the sounds always were wonderful, just dampened down rather in the movie(s) by the eye-grabbing visual effects. Then again, the sounds had to be good. Ben Burtt was hardly restricted to a BBC Radiophonic Workshop kind of budget.

Both of the film's Oscar-winning soundtracks—William's music and Burtt's incredible collection of audio-effects—were made available by George Lucas, along with the radio rights of his *Star Wars* book, and the first follow-up, *Splinter of the Mind's Eye*, to his old alma-mater, the University of Southern California. A rich prize indeed for its radio station, KUSC-FM.

They're not just a bunch of radio hams at KUSC. They're pros. And they served Lucas, very well. Radio's *Star Wars* is a neat show and the fact that the BBC grabbed it (even if it did put Superman on the *Radio Times* cover that opening week) is a further example of how Auntie is getting more and more into the science fantasy game. Indeed on its radio waves, the Beeb is leaving its tv colleagues far behind in the space race... not to mention Britain's dwindling film industry. Well, there's hardly any of that left to mention. (Anyone interested in a *Saturn 3* radio serial...!)

Originally, the Beeb's senior radio producer, John Tydeman, was set as director and co-producer (with top sound man Thomas Voegeli). Scriptwriting chores were handed down to the BBC's Raymond Chandler re-writer, Bill Morrison, from Glasgow.

Well, not anymore... The finished product—finished a year over schedule—is very firmly in American radio hands.

"I wanted to bring in the best talent working in contemporary radio drama," said Richard Toscan, upped from associate to executive producer of the project. "We succeeded in doing just that by getting John Madden and Tom Voegeli, the same team that won the 1979 Prix Italia, the more prestigious international radio drama award."

Actually, that first choice of director, John Tydeman, was also a Prix Italia winner... Ah well.

Toscan got his way and John Madden directed the serial, with Tom Voegeli in charge of the sound-mixing, the laborious post-production work of melding Madden's studio work to Burtt's film effects. Brian Daley took over the scriptwriting, with Lindsay Smith as his story editor.

They had all of Lucas' characters to draw upon—from the film and the books. Which explains how Luke Skywalker's mate, Biggs Darklighter (named Starfighter in the BBC publicity release!) finally gets into the dramatised *Star Wars* act. Biggs had been in the cast of the first film, but wound up on the cutting-room floor.

Though Mark Hamill and Anthony Daniels both reprise their film roles in the radio version, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Alec Guinness, Peter Cushing, James Earl Jones, et al, proved unavailable. Many were tied up on foreign movie locations at the time. Others



didn't feel like a Transatlantic trip just for radio . . .

While this is a pity, it makes the radio serial all the more intriguing: the first time we've an opportunity to hear other actors in some of our most cherished space fantasy roles.

Rising film actor Perry King, for example, has the Han Solo role. He's not bad, either. Ann Sachs is the new Princess Leia, and another leading American black star, Brock Peters, took over Darth Vader's heavy breathing. Instead of the grand old British team of Guinness 'n' Cushing, veteran Americans Bernard Behrens and Keene Curtis play Ben Kenobi's force and Grand Moff Tarkin's stench!

But just as the real stars of the original film were the special effects men led by John Dykstra, the true star of the radio version of the word according to Lucas, is Ben Burt. And, in a way, so he should be. Lucas found him, after all, by going back to one of his University of Southern California instructors, to find out who was the best guy around campus for sound. Without any hesitation the reply was . . . Burt.

"I was recommended since I was the biggest fanatic down there in terms of sound effects," adds Ben. "I didn't know George Lucas at all. I knew of him but I never met him. I was interviewed by Gary Kurtz and . . . my first assignment was to come up with a voice for the Wookiee."

At first, Burt relates with a smile, George and Gary weren't telling him too much about the movie. They couldn't. George's tale was still evolving. When Ben eventually saw a script it was maybe the third draft—and it was the fourth draft that was shot.

He started inventing his various noises by breaking down the script into various categories—weapons, vehicles, doors, and of course, special voices like Artoo and Chewie. And one of his favourites, Greedo, the alien bounty-hunter after Solo. "Originally," grins Burt, "he spoke all his dialogue in reverse. But I later changed that. Greedo's language was really Peruvian Incan . . . which I also used for a gold, bug-eyed robot in the Sandcrawler." (He also used certain African dialects for the Jawas).

Chewbacca is all animal sounds, devised

out of recordings of walrus, lions, cougars, bears and even camels. "A human could not make the sound that the Wookiee makes," insists Burt. "There's not a touch of the human voice in there."

As difficult as all these sounds appear to be, even for a sound nut like Ben Burt, he says that R2-D2 proved the most difficult. He kept taking his experiments back to George for his comments. The difficulty, says Burt, was the correct melding of the electronic and the organic—in order to build in some kind of human, or, at least, less than alien machinery personality.

But on July 4th, and every Saturday thereafter for thirteen weeks you'll be able to judge for yourself just how much better Ben Burt's sound effects are in stereo.

And, if you weren't overly impressed at Easter, just remember Tony Daniels says. "The amount of enjoyment you get in radio is reciprocal to the amount of effort you put into it . . . and you have to put in a lot of effort if you're really listening."

Sure, but not quite as much as Ben Burt did . . .

Star Wars (1980)

Bernard Behrens (as Ben Kenobi), John Considine (Tion), Keene Curtis (Grand Moff Tarkin), Anthony Daniels (C-3PO), Stephen Elliot (Prestor), Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker), Perry King (Han Solo), Brock Peters (Darth Vader), Ann Sachs (Princess Leia Organa), David Ackroyd (Antilles), Adam Arkin (Fixer), James Blendick (Bartender/General Dodonna), Kale Browne (Biggs Darklighter), Joel Brooks (Heater), David Crennon (Motti), John Dukakis (Rebel), Bruce French (Comlink/The Dealer), Anne Garety (Aunt Beru), David Alan Grier (Spacer/Squeak), Jerry Hardin (Red Leader), John Harkins (Tarrick/Owner/Gen Willard), Cynthia Herman (Cammie), Thomas Hill (Uncle Owen), Scott Jacoby (Windy), Phillip Kellard (Deak), plus Clyde Burton, Bruce French, David Alan Grier, Jerry Hardin, Meshach Taylor, Marc Varanian, John Welsh and Kent Williams as Imperial Stormtroopers, Rebel Pilots, etc.

Directed by John Madden. Adapted for radio by Brian Daley from characters and situations created by George Lucas. Sound-mixing and post-production Tom Voegell. Sound design for Lucasfilm Ben Burt. Music composed and conducted by John Williams. Story editor Lindsay Smith. Casting and production co-ordination Mort Sahr. Executive producer Richard Tescan (For KUSC-FM) and Carol Tittelman (Lucasfilm).



Starburst: *Scanners* has already proven itself a great success both here and in America but you haven't packed your bags and moved to California. You haven't been seduced by Hollywood as yet...

David Cronenberg: Well, I've had a lot of phone calls and a lot of offers from Hollywood producers. One of the things I envy about a "studio" film is the potential of the distribution that can be done. I saw that with *Avco Embassy*, and the way they handled *Scanners*. They are not a "major", but they are very well organised. There is no guarantee that a film will not be thrown away by a "major", but if they do decide to put all their muscle behind a film it just gets so much more exposure. At the moment that's really the only thing that I would want from Hollywood. There is still a reasonable amount of money in Canada for films. I have a very good relationship with my producers, the same people that I did *The Brood* and *Scanners* with as well as my new film, *Videodrome*. We've all learned a lot and grown together and I don't want to throw that away.

Is there a fear of losing control of your films if you become a Hollywood director?
I think so. You just don't know what you are going to run into. There's a lot of temperament and a lot of weird energy in the film world in general. If you find some people that seem to understand what you are doing and vice-versa, I think it's not a bad idea to hang onto that relationship. On the other hand, Hollywood is always very tempting, though not to move there. To become a "Hollywood" director is not a fantasy or dream of mine.

What happened to the trilogy that you were involved in with Walter Hill and John Carpenter?

Well, John Carpenter pulled out and because he pulled out Paramount pulled out. The producers of the film tried to keep it alive. At the moment they are talking to Joe Dante. It's one of those things that shifts practically every month. Meanwhile, I can't do what I was intending, which was to write the entire script, because I don't have time. This was all six months ago. I'm now almost at the stage where if they are ready to go with it I won't be able to because I'll be shooting *Videodrome*. This is another thing about Hollywood. The way things happen in Canada is very different, because of the way films are financed. When my producer, Pierre David says "I've got the money, let's go", that's it, there's no question—it's going to be shot. In Hollywood, it's not necessarily the money that's a problem, it's just that everything is a "development deal", so it can be cancelled right up until the last minute. So you have a lot of very abstract feelings floating around so that what happens is that you are just about ready to shoot and it disappears, just like it was never there! That's happened to a lot of directors at my stage. That's another thing about moving to Hollywood. It would be foolish of me to go from a situation where I am being given six or seven million dollars to shoot *Videodrome*, from my own script and shoot it in my own time...

How much did *Scanners* cost?

It was actually about three million US dollars. It was inflated by publicity people to about four and a half million dollars. When you take into account inflation, since I shot *The Brood*, interim financing, completion bonding and so on—they are legitimately part of the budget—but it is not money that I can use to put something on the screen. It felt like a bigger budget than *The Brood*, but not that much bigger, particularly as *The Brood* was structured to be a smaller and more intimate film, whereas *Scanners* is flashier and more out there.

So where does the money go?

Mainly in time. There's a nine week shooting schedule instead of a six week schedule. That's a lot of money right there, paying a lot of people for three weeks' extra work. It went into a much longer post-production period—we were editing for eleven months. On the other hand we had almost zero pre-production, only two weeks. That was very scary for everybody! One of the weeks of shooting was done six months into the editing...

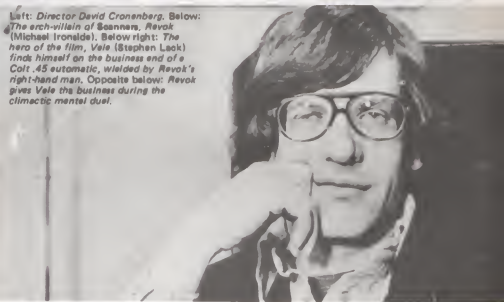
...the duel at the end?

That's right, and also the scenes in the subway between Revok and Keller and a couple of other odds

INSIDE CROBENBERG

STARBURST PART INTERVIEW
DIRECTOR DAVID
HIS HORROR FILMS
AND, MORE RECENTLY,
TALKED TO CROBENBERG
LONDON RECENTLY
AND HIS FUTURE

Left: Director David Cronenberg. Below: The arch-villain of *Scanners*, Revok (Michael Ironside). Below right: The hero of the film, Vele (Stephen Lack) finds himself on the business end of a Colt .45 automatic, wielded by Revok's right-hand man. Opposite below: Revok gives Vele the business during the climactic mental duel.



and ends like Keller watching the monitor while Vele and Ruth are talking. These scenes were also written afterwards and not part of the original script. Why did you include those scenes in the subway. I thought it was a false mystery—padding even? Perhaps it was the style it was shot in, that I don't show you Revok's face to begin with, though you probably know that it's Revok. My feeling was simply this: that without those two scenes you never see Revok and Keller together, their conspiracy was total verbalisation and we have never seen it. I felt that there was a certain "feel" missing. I think too, that there is some subsidiary information revealed in those scenes. I think it clarified some things. In one sense I think you are right, and in another I think that you would really miss them if they weren't there. They also add something just in terms of their tone. I'd like to talk about the structure of the film. In an early draft of the script the exploding head sequence takes place right at the beginning of the film. Why did you change it?

I shot that for the beginning with the scanner in tight close-up, and the idea is that he is really talking to the film audience. It was edited and put together the way it was written with that scene first. We did some tests with people and we found that because it was so strong it spoiled the rhythm of the following ten or fifteen minutes which were relatively slow. Secondly, it alienated a lot of people who don't appreciate that kind of power. They didn't have enough of a context to know what scanning was. It felt very gratuitous to them, in terms of violence and were turned off by the next half of the movie. These are people who mightn't generally go to horror films or enjoy science fiction, but might still like *Scanners*. Another thing, and you may laugh, is that people tend to come late to films, they walk in after the first three minutes. For me, films are really made for an audience, like the way

PRESENTS THE FIRST HALF OF A TWO-
EW WITH TOP CANADIAN FANTASY
/ID CRONENBERG, BEST KNOWN FOR
ILMS *SHIVERS*, *RABID*, *THE BROOD*
CENTLY, *SCANNERS*. PHIL EDWARDS
ONENBERG, WHEN HE VISITED
NTLY, ABOUT HIS WORK, HIS LIFE
RE PROJECTS.

BERG



poets read their poetry for reactions and make changes based on that. I used to sneer at test previews but I now realise that it makes perfect sense. You get so close to something that you can't objectively gauge how an audience is going to react to something and you need that kind of resonance. I really agonised over that change for quite some time. It was suggested by somebody else, though I wasn't forced into it at all. It shifted some things too... it actually made Dr Ruth seem stronger in some way in the scenes at ConSec. He already has another scanner in the wings, whereas originally he had to go out and find somebody. I finally decided that it really gained more than it lost by the change. You can only really do that when the film actually exists... a script really doesn't quite give it all to you.

To me *Scanners* was a series of brilliant sequences, though I felt it lacked both the structure and the depth of characterisation of *The Brood*.

Well, I tend to agree with you. The question then becomes, "Is that necessarily a bad thing, or is it just a different thing?" I do agree though that *Scanners* doesn't have the characterisation of *The Brood* and it doesn't have the emotional momentum that continues all the way through. On the other hand it's difficult to say if this is bad or good. It depends on what you want from a film I suppose. You can go too far the other way...

I think of the turn-of-the-Century plays which were immaculate... all the loose threads were tied up. I think I'm experimenting, and I think I do that even more in *Videodrome*. I like narrative, and I like plot and the way a plot can illuminate character and can also have imagistic resonances and so on. But on the other hand I hate the total tyranny of narrative in the sense that once you launch in this direction, because of audience's expectations, based on what they have come to accept as proper narrative, you have to continue. I want to break down those barriers, or reverse them, or do something with them.

Is that getting back to things like *Stereo* and *Crimes of the Future*?

That's interesting... many people who have known those early films have been very excited to see *Scanners*. For the same reasons that you think it's weaker, they have now seen a mainstream, commercial manifestation of my earlier films. They think that is an interesting trick to have brought off. Even in terms of lighting and camera angles they find it closer to those early films.

Are you aware that your films have a unique quality to them, quite unlike that of other directors currently working in the genre?

When I've just written a script or I'm making a film I think that everyone is making that film! It's a sort of strange paranoia. I'll read something about a film and think, "This sounds like *Videodrome*", on the surface, and so I'll go and see it and of course it's nothing like it. So in that sense I suppose I don't assume that what I'm doing is unique at all. On the other hand I always feel uneasy being lumped in with Carpenter, Romero or DePalma. Not because I might not admire a film they might have made, or that I'm being compared with them, but because I really do, at that point, think that there are differences that are so substantial, that the comparisons have to be based on superficial things.

People are very keen to put people like yourself into slots, like calling you "Canada's King of Horror". I've used that phrase myself. Do you get bored with that? Is it conceivable that you are going to make a film that isn't a horror film—you are a film-maker rather than just a director of horror films.

It's very conceivable—I'm sure that I will. It's just a question of time. Once again, people seem to ignore completely *Fast Company*. It doesn't fit into the category. It was played at the San Diego Film Festival when they couldn't get *Scanners*. It received a terrific reaction from the audience and that has frustrated me even more. I'm very fond of the film. Are you still driving fast cars yourself?

Absolutely, and motorcycles. *Fast Company* expresses a part of me that for various reasons just doesn't work in my other films. I love motorbikes and cars and rock music. I don't get to work that into the other films that I do which are another part of me. In many ways though, I brought that on myself. I billed

myself as "Canada's King of Horror" and lately I've been demoted to the "Baron of Blood" and "Prince of Horror"! I realised, that in terms of publicity, if somebody has a neat bitesize little thing that you can tab you with, then you are likely to get more publicity. It has returned to haunt me a bit I suppose, because I think *Scanners* starts to get heavily into science fiction, as well as horror... it has both elements. But people who come to see it, expecting it to be *Friday 13th* are going to be disappointed. And yet some people expect that, because of the way it's sold in the States and that worries me a little bit.

What do you think of the theory that your films are about mad scientists and science gone wild?

I don't agree with it. My films aren't really about mad scientists at all and they're not really about science being bad either. In a way, *Scanners* is slightly more self-conscious in an art sense. It's the first time I've ever put an artist in a film. In a real sense my scientists have always been my artists. In a weird way they are the personae in my films because they're the ones who are creative and the ones who are obsessed. They're the ones with the energy that sets things in motion and to that extent I identify with them. It's not as though I'm looking in fear at science which I don't understand and worrying about where it's leading us. That's not the way I feel about it at all. I feel an incredible empathy for the process of science and I really think in terms of Robert Kassler's book *Active Creation*, in which he discusses human creativity and shows a basis that creativity in science and creativity in art come from exactly the same place. I firmly believe that. So that's not my attitude at all. I could just as well have an insane sculptor as an insane scientist in terms of emotional attachment to it anyway.

Is this all part of your interest in technology and machinery?

In a way. It's not really so much machinery or technology. It's much more my interest in my own body. It's physiology and biology that I'm obsessed with, not really machines.

How does that tie in with the bodily corruption which seems to run through all your films?

I suppose it's a medieval preoccupation, although I'm not a Catholic, maybe this is my version of original sin. Basically, the idea that you are born having to face your own death, and death is very physical, not



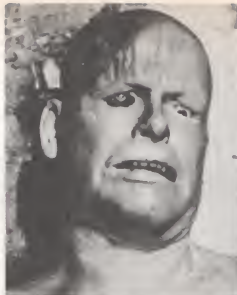
abstract—you know the spectra of having a mind that feels it ought to be able to live for another 2,000 years having to watch the body that supports it, or is somehow inexplicably linked with it, age and die. That's true horror for me. When I'm feeling more cosmic about it, it's quite wonderful and miraculous and marvelous and I don't mind. Other times it's totally unbearable. That also has very much to do with why I think of all the English kings who were totally obsessed with succession to the throne in very physical terms, it was a question of their own immortality. They may have believed in the Kingdom of Heaven but at the same time they wanted flesh of their flesh to go on living after them. Even in popular culture it's considered a tragedy for someone to see his children die. You're supposed to die first and they're supposed to live on after you. And yet, is that real immortality or just a delusion? Or is it only immortality in a purely scientific sense of the continuation of certain genes and chromosomes or does it really have meaning for the person who dies? I think it's all of those things together.

But surely every time you get behind the wheel of a racing car the chances of dying are multiplied. Yes, in a sense racing is really up front. It's kind of testing yourself, bringing yourself to the edge. I suppose it's a little psychopathic in the sense that some people feel that you have to bring yourself to some kind of edge, either emotionally or physically, to really feel where you are. People do walk around like zombies, unaware of their own physicality, their own emotionality. In a way that's what *Scanners* is about. A scanner is someone who is so sensitive it's almost unbearable and compared with that, the rest of the world is "zomboid". There's nothing like falling off a motorcycle to make you aware of your own body. I'm not even being facetious about that. Not that I want to do that, but after it's happened, there's a good aspect to it, I feel. So yes, I think that's connected. You really want to bring yourself to the edge to be able to feel how much different it is to be alive than dead.

So what happens if you're dead?

Well, you don't want to go over the edge. Then that's suicidal and a whole other ballgame. At the same time, just in defence of car racing, I must say that the kind of racing I do now is vintage racing, usually various expensive old cars. It's very gentlemanly, although you can certainly still crash. It's still fast. You're going 120 mph in the company of other cars going at that speed, and if something breaks you're still going to be in trouble, no question. But at the same time you get 60 year old gentlemen racing 60 year old Bugattis and thrashing them about. It doesn't feel like death or nastiness to me when I do that. It feels very positive and enthusiastic and everybody's into the old cars. It's only at a very lower level that what we're talking about functions in that kind of racing. I think you're probably quite right. It's probably much more dangerous crossing the streets of Paris on foot than it is to race vintage cars. I just came from there and I never experienced anything like that on the racetrack. If someone came that close to you on the racetrack you'd really shake your fist at them! Especially in vintage racing. You don't want to get your car dented!

That's why I say, in a sense, that making a film like *Scanners* or *The Brood* is like car racing. I am rehearsing my own death when I make those films. Testing myself against my own death. I think that's one of the reasons why actors love death scenes traditionally. They are also testing themselves against their own death, experimenting to see how it feels, trying it on to see how it fits. I do it to the extent that the characters I've created are in fact a piece of me. If I knock them off it's not a thing to be taken lightly and I don't take it lightly. You don't create a wonderful character and then knock them off and onto the next one—it's not like that at all, it's much more serious.



Above: Two of Dick Smith's dummy heads used in the exploding head sequence in the opening moments of *Scanners*. Below: A portrait of Michael Ironside as Revok, the evil Scanner. Bottom: The unfortunate actor whose head seems to explode on screen poses with the models used.



Inside Cronenberg will be continued in the next issue of *Starburst*



WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE: THE WORKERS AT "METAL BREAKDOWNS" ON SPONDOLIK IV HAVE PICKED UP A STRANGE BROADCAST ON THEIR SMALL RADIO! THE PLEA FROM AN UNKNOWN CRAFT FOR A LANDING SPACE TURNS OUT TO BE NOT A RADIO SHOW, BUT A REAL REQUEST FROM A SHIP HOPING TO LAND ON THE LONG-DEFUNCT LAUNCH PAD ON WHICH THEIR BUILDING NOW STANDS! NOW, ON WITH THE MOTLEY .. !



SECONDS LATER, THE WRECKAGE OF THE SPACECRAFT SLOWS TO A JEDDERING HALT... AND A LONE FIGURE APPROACHES...

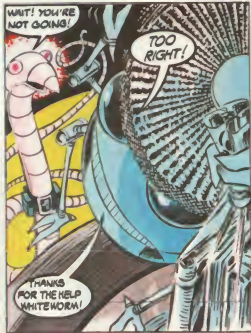
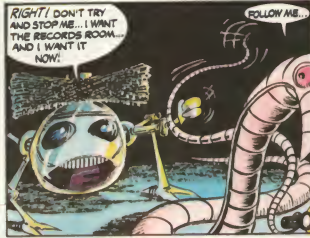
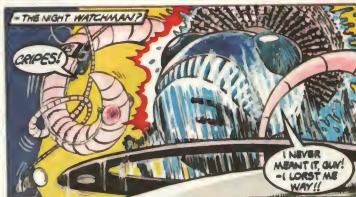
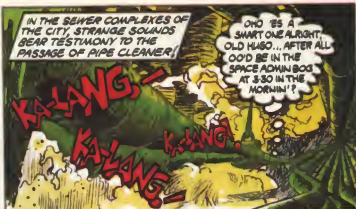


-IT'S ONE OF THE ANCIENT TERRAPIN CRAFT THAT WERE SENT OUT EARLY IN THE 52ND CENTURY... AND IN A STATE OF TRAUMA... IT'S HAD A TERRIBLE SHOCK! IT'S ENTRY IN THE BOOK OF WORLDS SAYS TERRAPIN STANDS FOR 'TOTALLY EXTRA TO REQUIREMENT RESEARCH APPARATUS TO PROBE INTERGALACTIC NOTHINGNESS' - IT SOUNDS TO ME LIKE THE PRODUCT OF A SCHEME TO PROMOTE INDUSTRY DURING ONE OF THE GREAT DEPRESSIONS.

WE MUSTN'T UPSET IT MORE... WE'LL HAVE TO DO A LITTLE INVESTIGATING ON OUR OWN...



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**NEXT MONTH! WHITEWORM MAKES HIS PLAY...
AND LIVES TO REGRET IT! — (JUST!)**

STORY AND ART
BY PAUL NEARY

Interview feature
by Alan Jones

THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW





Who would have thought that a film whose star was "a sweet transvestite from Transsexual, Transylvania" would be the first film in cinematic history to affect an audience so strongly that they would actually make-up and dress as the characters, use props, talk back at the screen and parallel the film's action exactly? Well, anyone who has seen the recent releases of *Fame* and *Willie & Phil* will have seen part of the fascinating experience that is now *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Why exactly it has happened is almost certainly due to the very simple philosophy employed by the original show's creator, Richard O'Brien, of "Don't Dream it, Be it", a phrase he found in the catalogue of that famous underwear manufacturer, Frederick's of Hollywood. It is this credo that turns cinemas all over the USA on Friday and Saturday nights into an artistic free-for-all. In short, it becomes Party Time. Australia seems to be hot on the heels of America's *Rocky* appreciation, so could the same happen here in Great Britain? According to O'Brien the film does have a loyal following in Glasgow and Sunderland and audiences are now just beginning to dress up for late shows in, inevitably, the king's Road, Chelsea, the place where it all began.

"It's astounding. Time is fleeting. Madness takes its toll".

This latest chapter in the *Rocky Horror* saga is just another part of the extraordinary chain of events that started when an unemployed Richard O'Brien decided to write something that he could be part of and something that he would like to see. "There really wasn't much on in the West End that I would have crossed the road to see. There were a few quasi-religious shows like *Godspell* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Directing *Superstar* was Jim Sharman who wanted me to take over the role of Herod. I played it for one matinee but the show's producer Robert Stigwood didn't like the way I played it, so I was paid off as I had signed a contract. I lived off these proceeds while I wrote the show. I didn't see it as writing, I saw it more as building a picture like a collage and putting a lot of things together that I particularly liked, like Hammer films and B-movie dialogue. Richard Carlson's performance in *Creature from the Black Lagoon* is one of the great Brads of our time. Then I did a play at the Theatre Upstairs at the Royal Court in Sloane Square once again for Jim

Sharman. I mentioned to him that I had written a musical that amused me and if he would like to read it, I hoped it would amuse him too. He did like it and asked a musician, Richard Hartley, who was doing the incidental music for the play I was in (Sam Shepard's *The Unseen Hand*) to come and have a listen to the songs. He was very reluctant but when I sang him 'Science Fiction—Double Feature' he became very interested. Then the Royal Court asked Sharman to do a play at the Theatre Downstairs and he said yes, only if he could have a bit of fun in the Theatre Upstairs first". And the rest is history. *The Rocky Horror Show* opened at the Theatre Upstairs in the June of 1973 and what originally cost £2000 to put on and was seen as an excuse for nine actors to do something for five weeks in the Summer, was on the first fishnet-stockinged leg of eventual worldwide recognition. *The Daily Mail's* theatre critic, Jack Tinker, gave the show one of its many rave reviews. "O'Brien's spangled piece of erotic fantasy is so fast, so sexy and so unexpectedly well-realised that one is in danger of merely applauding it without assessing it". With reviews like that it became obvious that just playing to 60 people per night was not enough.

"It was great when it all began. I was a regular Frankie fan".

The show's popularity quickly necessitated a move to a larger theatre, the converted Classic Chelsea, but the show had to move again when plans for that cinema to be demolished couldn't be held up any longer. It then settled into the King's Road Theatre, yet another converted cinema where it stayed until it eventually moved into the Comedy theatre in the west end which is where it closed in the Summer of 1980. Voted *The Best Musical of '73* by *The Evening Standard*, the American rights were picked up by impresario Lou Adler who took it to a Los Angeles rock club, *The Roxy* on the Sunset Strip with Paul Jabara who had left "Jesus Christ Superstar"—it was his part as Herod that O'Brien had auditioned for. *The Rocky Horror Show* reached its apex of Stateside popularity in 1974.

When the show was moved to New York, it was a critical disaster and played only 45 performances. "It was all Lou Adler's fault. When we went to New York he assumed he would be able to say, 'Look out New York, we've got it here', which was the most fatal mistake. New York critics tell you if you have a hit or

not, you don't tell them. He also took the show uptown to Broadway. We wanted it handled exactly the way as it had been handled here, by lessening an old cinema, but unfortunately it was his ego at stake and he was proved wrong. Even though we died a death critically, the people who did come and see us always applauded at the end. You can't tell people to do that. I'm often told that New Yorkers probably found it passé but I don't think that is the case at all. The timing of the show was extremely lucky. It hit at exactly the time of the glam-rock/bisexuality trend that was happening. That wasn't premeditated in anyway, when I wrote it I wasn't saying, 'This is what they want', because nobody knew if they wanted it at all."

The show is at present touring the States again due to the interest in it aroused by the film. The tour started at Boston and according to O'Brien who went over to do some promotion, the true spirit of the original is very definitely being upheld.

"Lost in time and lost in space. And meaning"

It was inevitable that one of the decades most original entertainments would be filmed. Twentieth Century-Fox put *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* behind the cameras at Bray Studios, ironically the home of Hammer movies. A lot of the original performers from the London show were reunited for the film as it retold the story of Brad Majors (*Barry Bostwick*) and Janet Weiss (*Susan Sarandon*) who while driving to see their old friend, Dr Everett V. Scott (*Jonathan Adams*), have a flat tyre and are forced to seek refuge in an old castle. However, "over at the Frankenstein's place a party is in full swing and when they arrive they are introduced to the strange inmates like Riff Raff, the butler (*Richard O'Brien*) and his sister Magenta (*Patricia Quinn*), the ghoulish groupie Columbia (*Little Nell*) and eventually the lord of the manor himself, Frank N. Furter (*Tim Curry*), who is the middle of experiments, to make a perfect man, Rocky Horror

The film opened in London at the Rialto cinema on August 14th. 1975 with possibly one of the worst advertising campaigns in recent memory. "Lotsa larks and sex", "Gorgeous girls" and "Thrills and chills" said the embarrassing poster. O'Brien says that Fox didn't like the picture much and didn't want to promote it, but in all probability it would seem likely that as they



had just got burned over Brian De Palma's *Phantom of the Paradise* which had cost them a million dollars for the distribution rights and had died at the box office, they didn't want to promote a film that to them seemed in a similar vein. What was certain however, and O'Brien agrees with this, was that the film lacked the vitality and energy of the stage version and in parts was very slow paced, but whatever the reasons for its failure, the film languished here and in America and soon disappeared from sight.

"Let's do the Time Warp again"

"Word started drifting back to me about the cult following that was forming in America about two years after the film had been released. There is a fight between the people in New York and Austin, Texas as to who actually started it all, but I don't think we will ever find out for sure who the first people to organise a dressing up contest were. It really is crazy and in fact that's what I call them when I go over to make the occasional appearance. Some places are into their fourth year of late night presentations. I thought it had all peaked about 18 months ago but Sal Piro, (President of the National *Rocky Horror Picture Show* Fan Club), tells me that a lot of people who have drifted away have been replaced by a lot of newcomers and especially a younger equally enthusiastic crowd. Sal must be near the record of seeing it which I believe is about 300 plus. Seeing it for that sort of audience isn't really seeing it though, it's actually being there which is totally different thing altogether. Nobody said let's bridge the gap between film and theatre but this is exactly what's happening. I went to see the film in a cinema with 2000 people from Long Island and it was probably the best theatre I've ever seen in my life. There was the film, members of the audience running up and acting on the stage and the audience pre-empting the lines, saying them at the same time, holding up umbrellas during the rain-storm, squirting water pistols for the rain and making all the sound effects. It has to be structured very tightly because another line is about to come up. It is an amazing experience to watch. When I go over for visits or to receive yet another award plaque, the fans always say to me, 'Thank you for giving us *Rocky*.' I always giggle mainly because I dissociated myself from it and stood to one side the whole time the phenomena started. As far as I was concerned it could have been someone else's. I do

that with a lot of my life, I think you get more comedy value out of life if you look at it as opposed to live it. *Rocky* has made it possible to knock on anyone's door and get at least two minutes of their time. Even if I didn't want to do that, the knowledge that I can do that. I would like to be financially secure because of *Rocky* but I'm not. I say that but I like a bit of uncertainty about life, I also think that you would get exploited anyway, I'm a bit of a cynic in that respect. I still find it hard to believe that the soundtrack album hasn't gone gold in the States for example. It has never stopped selling. The most surprising thing is that we didn't have a hit off the album in Britain.

'Touche Touche me' was a hit in Japan, 'Time Warp' became the most unlikely hit in Australia after the film was re-released and in South Africa the album went double gold and then they banned the film".

It's South Africa that provides O'Brien with his favourite *Rocky* story. He had gone to a party where the name of the game was fancy dress. The party was in full swing, both men and women in drag as their favourite character from the film. The telephone rang, and as O'Brien was the nearest to it, he answered it. A voice on the other end of the receiver said, 'We'd better warn you, we are the police and we're on our way over.' O'Brien decided to make his excuses and leave and not be the one to ruin the party atmosphere. As he was walking down the street, a car pulled up to him and two men dressed in corsets and fishnet tights asked him if he knew where the *Rocky Horror* party was taking place. O'Brien said he did, but advised them not to go as it was about to be raided by the police. Whereupon, of the men said, 'What do you mean, we are the police, we wanted to let everyone know we were coming! Which just goes to show how far reaching the effects of O'Briens creation are.

According to O'Brien, if he had to choose which album out of the many show recordings and the soundtrack that exists, he would pick the original London show album on the Johnathan King UK Records label. 'Mainly because it was made in entirety in 36 hours from backing track to final mix. The cast were in the studio for ten hours and the whole enterprise cost something in the region of £2000. It was done so quickly but managed to put across the feeling of anarchy and urgency. It was badly produced in all honesty but it had guts. The song 'Eddie's Taddy' was the last to be written and it was written in transit between the Theatre Upstairs and the Classic

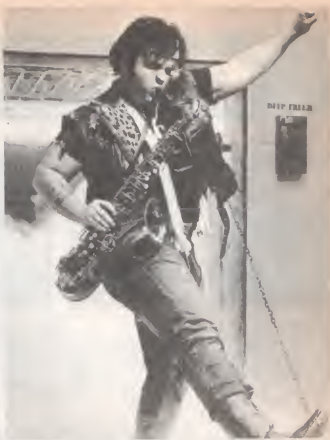
Chelsea, which is the reason why Johnathan King never obtained the rights and the reason why the song isn't on the album. The song 'Once in a While' was filmed but we dropped it as it seemed to come at the wrong time in the movie and badly slow it down. 'Touche Touche Me' was written solely because we had Julie Covington playing the role of Janet and it seemed a crying shame not to give her something to sing".

"And that's just one small fraction of the main attraction"

Almost all the reviews for the film and the show managed to point out Tim Curry's role as the highlight of the entertainment and O'Brien is quick to point out that the show does owe his portrayal of Frank N. Furter a great deal, 'but he owes the show a lot too'. I think people really got Tim's contribution out of perspective because unless you have something good to perform you can't be a really good performer. He also owes the rest of his cast a lot too. If he had been surrounded by eight dummies, people would have said, 'Well he's good but don't go because the show isn't'. He was surrounded by fine actors and actresses—Patricia Quinn stole everybody's hearts when she opened the show. Brad, Janet and Riff Raff all appear before Frank and warn the audience up well, ready for his entrance. Tim's was the definitive performance, (although some say Reg Livermore's performance in Sydney, Australia was best), but it does annoy me that other people didn't get the recognition they deserved. Without their support he wouldn't have got to Hollywood, wouldn't have got a recording contract and I think he should bear these things in mind. He wears *Rocky* around his neck like a mill-stone and that really engers me because without it the doors wouldn't have opened for him."

"Science Fiction-Double Feature"

Recently Richard O'Brien has been seen in the films *The Odd Job* and *Flash Gordon* but there was a time, back in the August of 1976 to be precise, that he did try to emulate the success of *The Rocky Horror Show* with a musical called *T. Zoo*. It was another attempt at combining musclemen, super-heroes and 8-movie dialogue, this time within the confines of a circus environment. Despite having people like Paul Nicholas, Diane Langton, Warren Clarke (chosen when Meatloaf had to turn it down) and Belinda



Sinclair starring, it was a disaster, but one that O'Brien reckons he will return to sometime in the future—possibly as a film. One thing O'Brien definitely had to turn to sometime in the not too distant future was the obvious need for a **Rocky Horror** sequel and the film **Shock Treatment**, made in virtual secrecy last November at Twickenham Studios is that long awaited sequel, or in O'Brien's own words, "It isn't a sequel nor a prequel. It's an equal". However when it first occurred to O'Brien about a possible sequel, his idea was to continue where the first film left off. "It was going to be very much a Monster-rises-from-the-Grave type of idea and Janet was going to have Frank's baby but when I mentioned this to Jim Sherman he wasn't really keen on the subject matter. I had already written 15 songs with this idea in mind and I told him quite categorically that I wasn't going to throw it all away, so we decided to use that as a frame and basic idea. The character of Frank N. Furter was dropped because we knew Tim wouldn't want to do it again and we didn't want anyone having to live up to his definitive image, although a lot of fans wrote in saying Freddie Mercury from the rock group Queen would be a good replacement. So I at first gave all of Frank's lines to Brad until we realised that Janet had to be the focal point of the story". What the story is actually about, O'Brien isn't really saying—what is certain is that Brad and Janet's marriage is on the rocks and Brad is institutionalised for not being a very good husband and that their marital problems are told in terms of American Television game shows and soap operas. "It's a story of how a modern marriage suffers from role playing and how people, unable to answer their own questions, take far too much advice from other people. It's something we all do, we only have to become a bit distraught and suddenly everybody comes up with the good advice—Leave him they say, he's bringing you down, he's just getting in the way of your career etc". Once again the film is peppered with 16 songs with titles like 'Little Black Dress', 'In My Own Way' and 'Shock Treatment', the latter being the reason for the film's title at present. When the film is first announced it was called simply **The Rocky Horror Picture Show Part 2**. Then it became **The Brad and Janet Show** until the Screen Actors Guild strike in America last year halted production. "We were promised five million dollars by Twentieth Century-Fox and then all the studios were hit by the strike. In a way it was the best

thing to happen to the film because we raised the money eventually from independent producers with Fox guaranteeing distribution and we had to find ways of doing it quickly and cheaply. As a result we improved it artistically about ten times over and we brought the whole project in for under four million dollars, which in this day is extraordinary, especially for a musical". Carrying on extensions of their previous characterisations are (Little) Neil Campbell, Patricia Quinn, O'Brien himself of course and Charles Gray who doesn't play a narrator/criminologist this time but a typical chat show regular who is asked throughout the film for his opinions. Those who haven't returned for the latest film are Tim Curry, Susan Sarandon who wanted ½ million dollars to do so, Berry Bostwick and Johnathan Adams who was tied up with the West End hit, *Tomfoolery*. Brad and Janet are this time played by Cliff de Young who worked with Jim Sherman in New York some years ago when he appeared in a show based on the famous *Oz* magazine trials and Jessica Harper, singing star from *Phantom of the Paradise* and more recently a favourite horror heroine from Dario Argento's *Suspria* and the minor cult film *The Evictors*. "We needed someone to play Dr Scott but as the concept changed, we realised we didn't need the exact character. He had to be German still as I had written a verse in one of the songs in that language but we took him out of the wheelchair and made him blind and cast Barry Humphries. He plays the Game Show host and I liked the idea of him trying to put people onto studio markers, I thought that was hysterically funny. The best thing I like about the new film is that even if *Rocky* hadn't existed it would be a great movie in its own right. It really does bear no relationship to *Rocky* you see. The fact that it is Brad and Janet is incidental. The fact that it's set in the town of Denton again is incidental—it could have been set anywhere in middle America". It seems that Fox don't want to tie the film too closely with **The Rocky Horror Picture Show** which could be seen as throwing away a golden opportunity but as O'Brien sees it *Rocky* is both a strength and a weakness in that department. "The strength is that the *Rocky* fans will go anyway either out of curiosity or loyalty to the first movie. I reckon that to be about 2-6 million people. Our weakness is that audiences are going to think it's more of the same". However, perhaps Fox will change their minds as they did with **The Final Conflict** that now says as a sub-heading "the final part in the Omen

trilogy" which is something that that film's producer, Harvey Bernhard swore would not be used in the advertising. One thing is certain according to O'Brien, **Shock Treatment** will be director Jim Sherman's breakthrough film. Sherman's other films *Shirley Thompson vs The Aliens*, *Summer of Secrets* and *The Night, The Prowler* have failed to establish him in the international field but **Shock Treatment** might just do that if it is as good as early reports suggest. "Even though it's about television it is very filmic. I saw it the other night and there has never been a film like it".

"I've tasted blood, And I want more"

And there will be more if **Shock Treatment** is a success—"I know Jim wants to do a third one and whereas the first dealt with movies and the second with television, the third will obviously have a theatrical environment. Everyone loves a backstage drama".

Sal Piro says that the *Rocky* response will invade the '80s and continue in the outlook of all the film's followers throughout their lives as they exhort the philosophy of becoming all the things they have ever dreamed of. That sort of adulation does seem rather over the top but does explain why youngsters seem to be particularly devoted to the film. When you are young, everything does seem possible and even if it is a film as bizarre as **The Rocky Horror Picture Show** that fires that sort of wish fulfillment, it shouldn't be dismissed so easily. However with his feet planted firmly on the ground O'Brien sees another aspect of the *Rocky* phantasm. "A lot of *Rocky*'s success has something to do with normal heterosexual society. It seems to titillate them as they seem to think it's rude and vaguely naughty whereas the truth of the matter is that it is very innocuous and innocent. That is it's charm".

"There are those who say that life is an illusion, that reality is simply a figment of the imagination". See you at the late night double-feature picture show!

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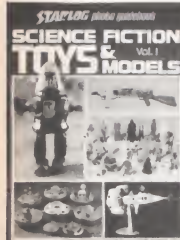
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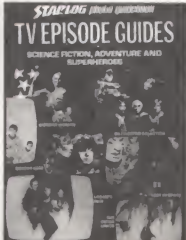
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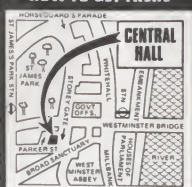
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It's only a movie



I can't understand it. It's been months since the publication of my novel *Skyship*, about 2000 foot long airship, and still no one has snapped up the film rights! Not even a peep from Irwin Allen. What's the matter with them all out there in the film world? Don't they realize what they're letting slip through their fingers?

Admittedly *Skyship* would be an expensive movie to make and these days movies with blockbuster budgets are on the way out, a situation partly caused by the debacle of *Heaven's Gate* which apparently cost zillions of dollars to produce and has so far recouped about three dollars fifty and a subway token. But I'd be willing to compromise—I'd be happy to cut a few hundred feet of my airship and make it only, say, 1500 feet long, which should save some money in special effects.

But the other problem I've got to face up to is that recent movies about airships have all failed to do well at the box office. Why this should be so I don't know. It's as if they have some kind of jinx on them. For example, there was John Frankenheimer's 1977 underrated thriller *Black Sunday* which featured one of the Goodyear blimps—the special effects got a bit ropey towards the end but overall it was a pretty good film yet it did zilch at the box office. As did Robert Wise's 1975 disaster film *The Hindenberg*. It suffered from the usual faults of a disaster film but the special effects, by Albert Whitlock, were brilliant. Some of Whitlock's shots of the airship in flight are guaranteed to bring tears to the eyes of any true airship fanatic.

Zeppelin, made in 1971 and directed by Etienne Perier, also featured some good special effects (by Wally Vevers) but unfortunately the script appeared to have

been written by someone suffering from a bad case of altitude sickness. There's a great film to be made about the use of Zeppelins during World War 1 but the makers of *Zeppelin* threw away their chance by concentrating on some crazy plot to steal the Magna Carta (or was it the Crown Jewels?). Still, it had some good moments and I was surprised it didn't do better at the box office.

I've got to admit I'm a sucker for any movie that features an airship, no matter how briefly. Movies like Disney's *Island at the Top of the World* (1974), another underrated

I've got to admit I'm a sucker for any movie that features an airship, no matter how briefly. Movies like Disney's *Island at the Top of the World* (1974), another underrated production, *The Red Tent* (1970), a rather dire Russian film based on a true story about an airship crashing in the Arctic in 1928, and *The Assassination Bureau* (1968), a mediocre movie saved, for me, by the appearance of a Zeppelin in the final reel. I even have fond memories of the awful *The Best House in London* (also 1968) thanks to the weird, bird-like airship, piloted by Warren Mitchell, of all people, last seen wafting past the Eiffel Tower.

The best example of how an airship can save a bad movie is the 1930 Cecil B. DeMille comedy *Madame Satan* which is completely forgettable apart from the sequence where a costume party is held on board a giant airship. The bizarre scene where long lines of girls (all dressed in cat costumes) are dancing up gangways leading into the airship, ranks high in my collection of Great Loony Moments in the Cinema.

And I suspect the reason why *Master of the World* (1961) is my favourite all-time bad

movie is because the *Albatross*, even though it looks like a flying jumble sale, is really an airship in disguise. The other reason for its charm is the marvellously incompetent way the makers used stock footage from other films to save money. The wildly anachronistic results of this mish-mash reach a peak in the sequence where the *Albatross* is supposedly hovering over 1860s London but the shots of the ground show a *medieval* city (the footage came from Olivier's *Henry VI*).

Oh well, I'll keep trying with *Skyship*. I can't be the only person in the world who enjoys airship movies. Perhaps Lord Lew Grade would be interested in it. It would make a great companion piece for his *Raise the Titanic*, particularly if I make a small change to the title. I can see the publicity blurb now: "You Saw Lord Grade *Raise the Titanic*! Now See Him Sink the *Hindenberg*!"

Want to know what was scaring the hell out of film-goers in 1911? Well, I was doing some research at the British Film Institute a while ago and while browsing through a July 1911 copy of the *Bioscope*, a film trade paper long since vanished I came across the following description of a film called *In the Grip of Alcohol*:

"The crescent art of the cinematograph may be likened to a great and beautiful flower, slowly unfolding itself. Year by year fresh petals fall open, disclosing still more of the full wonder which will finally be revealed when the evolution is at last completed. It is a gradual unfolding as a rule but every now and then some brilliant petal flashes forth marking a distinct epoch in the history of film production. And this wonderful drama, *In the Grip of Alcohol*, may be said, in all sincerity, to mark such an epoch..."

starring John Brosnan



On left: A scene from the Robert I. ...
 ... The Hindenburg ...
 ... at the news of John ...
 ... but still ...
 ... Below: The ...
 ... gale down in flame

"John is employed in an office where he is a respected and hardworking servant of the firm. One day his companions, leaving business, persuade him to join them in a game of billiards. At first he refuses, finding the incentive to return to his wife stronger than that which his fellow clerks offer him; but he does not wish to be churlish and consents. The game progresses, and meanwhile John's glass is kept full by his hosts, so

that he soon becomes unaware of the amount he has been drinking and the condition he is fast falling into ..."

"Six months later, John has become a confirmed drunkard. His whole manner and appearance has undergone a subtle but complete change, showing him a middle-aged man with a face lined by the marks of dissipation and unhappiness. It is now quite common for him to come home inflamed

with liquor, and his wife evinces no surprise when he rolls in at the door using coarse language and savage gestures."

"Eight years later the devilish handiwork of drink has been fully completed. John is now grotesque and hideous caricature of the man he used to be, wandering aimlessly through the streets with matted hair and blood-shot eyes, caring only to beg a penny or two which he may spend on liquor. His wretched wife keeps body and soul together in that miraculous way known only to the very poor ..."

But believe it or not things get worse and eventually: "... his wife has reached the end of her tether. The man she loved a maniac, her daughter dying and her son a criminal, life offers her nothing further and she determines to finish it by asphyxiating herself and the child with a charcoal burner. Thus, when the sot returns, he discovers the tragedy which awaits him. For a time the awful horror of the thing sobers his drunken brain but unable to endure the thought he rushes out and plunges into the wildest orgy. Pint after pint of scorching liquor pass his lips until his mind is unhinged and he becomes incapable of controlling himself ..."

"And then comes the last stage of all. Pent in a narrow straw-padded cell we see the maniac raving and gibbering in the agony of his lunatic fury ... with foam dripping from his distended jaws the madman hurls himself upon the ground, clawing with bleeding fingers at his face, his clothing and everything about him. But human nature cannot support madness for long, and, after one final fit, this being, scarcely recognisable as a man, at last drops dead to the ground."

Well, they not only don't make them like that any more, they also don't write reviews like that anymore (I loved all that stuff about the cinema being "likened to a great and beautiful flower"—I wonder what that anonymous writer of 70 years ago would say about today's cinema?). In the Grip of Alcohol was obviously the *Altered States* or even *Exorcist* of its era. But the most amazing thing is that the whole story—and I cut out a lot of the description—ran for just over two and half minutes!

Well, this John is off to the billiard hall to down a few pints of "scorching liquor". The raving, gibbering and clawing will come later, as usual.



book world

The "book of the film" comes in two basic varieties: there's the book on which the film is based, and then there's the novelization of the movie. In the latter case you can expect the book to mirror pretty faithfully the events and characters you see on the screen, because the author will basically be copying out the script, with embellishments (though if he or she turns out to be working from a different version of the script from that eventually used there will be divergences—eg, the novel of *Alien*, which contains the scenes ultimately deleted from the movie). If, however, the book is written first and sold to the movies, there is no predicting how much correspondence there will be between the two (to take an extreme case, you would be hard put to find many points of similarity between the book *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex* and Woody Allen's screen version).

All this by way of preamble to a review of Gary Brandner's *The Howling* (Hamlyn, £1.00), a book which shares the same title as a movie currently on release, but otherwise has relatively little in common with it. Well, that's not quite true: they are both about werewolves, and while watching the film I did make a mental note to the effect that one of the characters (I forget which) had the same first name as the corresponding figure in the book.

I'm primarily concerned here with the book,

of course: *Starburst* has plenty of expert reviewers to comment on the film. But having taken in both I'm bound to say I thought it was a pity that the film makers didn't stick more closely to Brandner's novel. They stuck in a number of in-jokes and tampered with the structure of the plot to no very good purpose (as well as altering the locales, which is less important), while the werewolf transformations seemed to me to blend some quite good effects with some that would have looked pretty crummy in an episode of *The Incredible Hulk*. Enough of that. *The Howling* (the novel) concerns a young Los Angeles couple, Roy and Karyn Beatty. After Karyn is raped in their home they look for a place in the country for her to recuperate. Roy rents a house in the remote village of Drago, hidden away in the mountains outside LA. At first it seems an ideal spot for Karyn to recover, even if the neighbours are a bit odd. But on the other hand, there are what appear to be old claw marks in the front door, and late at night Karyn starts to hear the howling far off in the woods...

Well, this is scarcely enduring literature, but it is very readable and quite expertly put together. Soon enough Roy is bitten by a wolf, and starts going out at night sprouting claws and hair. Karyn, understandably, begins to think all is not well. But wherever she turns for help in the village of Drago she meets with a nasty surprise. As I was reading

it I thought *The Howling* could be turned into a decent horror movie. I still think so, though the job hasn't yet been done.

It's a considerable leap (even for a werewolf) from *The Howling* to Christopher Priest's latest novel *The Affirmation* (Faber £6.25). It's over ten years since Priest published his first novel, but he is not a prolific writer and *The Affirmation* is only his sixth. His writing has generally speaking improved over the years and this latest work maintains the trend: it is his best book so far.

In the introduction to a science fiction anthology he edited, *Anticipations*, Priest quoted Brian Aldiss to the effect that "all good sf hovers on the verge of being something other than sf". *The Affirmation* comes at this aphorism, as it were, from the other side: it is something other than sf, which hovers on the verge of being sf. The novel is narrated by one Peter Sinclair, who after a series of personal disasters (his father dies; he loses his job; an affair of long-standing ends acrimoniously) retreats to a country cottage lent by a friend, to sort out his life. In order to find himself he starts work on an autobiography, but he soon discovers that a simple account of his life fails to generate the insights he is seeking—fails to generate a story for him to follow in the future—and so he starts again, changing around characters and events, inventing an imaginary locale, in order to arrive at a more imaginative, deeper



Photo by Jerry Bayer

truth. In other words, he starts to write a novel.

This may not sound like what we normally think of as a science fiction novel. This is because it isn't one. But so what—*The Affirmation* shows more clearly than most novels the idiocy of trying to put books into neat genre pigeonholes. The Dream Archipelago sequences could by themselves be called sf, being set in an imaginary world with talk of immortality treatments (and, indeed, Priest has published other stories set entirely in the Dream Archipelago, thereby tempting the unwary critic into equating him in some way to Peter Sinclair) but we would accept that the sf trappings were being used by the author for a metaphorical exploration of various of his concerns. Exactly the same can be said of their use in *The Affirmation*, except that Priest has placed another level of fictionalizing between us and them by making them the work of a character within the novel. It is interesting, of course, that they are the work of an insane man (perhaps in this respect the novel can be seen as an implied criticism of the whole business of writing science fiction!).

If this all sounds rather cerebral and theoretical I'm doing it less than justice. I found *The Affirmation* a compulsive book—one of those all-too-rare novels which demands that you organize your life around reading it, for as long as it takes. It's very much a late twentieth century novel in its

sophisticated awareness of the ways in which an author can manipulate the levels of "reality" he or she portrays, and it is both effective and original in the way it deploys that knowledge; it is also very well written. Priest's previous novel, *A Dream of Wessex*, also shifted from one level of reality to another, but did so clearly under the influence of Philip K. Dick (though it was none the worse for that). This time Priest has gone beyond influences and put his own stamp on the proceedings. If I didn't have the review copy this is a book I'd go out and buy it in hardcover.

Which is not something I would say Frederik Pohl's latest novel, *The Cool War* (Gollancz, £5.95), enjoyable reading though it is. Pohl of recent years has been a real phenomenon. He made his name in the 1950s with a series of social satires, many of them written in collaboration with C.M. Kornbluth (the most famous being *The Space Merchants*, though readers who remember BBC tv's *Out of the Unknown* may recall their adaptation of Pohl's solo stories "The Midas Plague" and "The Tunnel Under the World"). After Kornbluth's sadly premature death in 1958 Pohl went into a long decline, but in the last years he has emerged transformed and revitalized with some of the best pure science fiction ever written—novels like *Man Plus*, *Gateway* and *Jem*: all award-winners, all well worth reading. *The Cool War* is by comparison lightweight, as Pohl is surely

aware. It's set a few years in the future, after conventional warfare has gone out of fashion. Nations are still at each other's throats, however, but in more clandestine fashion. Small groups of infiltrators aim to wreak as much havoc as possible in rival countries without leaving any evidence as to who was responsible. The protagonist, a Unitarian minister with the unlikely name of H. Hornswell Hake is drafted unwillingly into active service on account of his Middle East background, and soon finds himself a combatant in a war he didn't even know was going on. It's an entertaining social satire, not entirely lacking in bite but generally amiable in mood. Published five years ago one would have said it was Pohl's best novel for more than a decade; now it fails to stand comparison with its immediate predecessors but it is still a readable and civilized book.

Still another sf writer bites the dust, I'm afraid. There seems to be a steady stream of them at the moment. This time it's James H. Schmitz, who died on April 18th of a pulmonary illness. He was 69. He had been publishing sf regularly since 1949, and was best known for his novel *The Witches of Karres* and for a series of stories featuring the female telepath Telzey Amberdon (Schmitz was unusual for featuring female lead characters in his stories at a time when the function of most women in sf stories was to scream and cower whenever something unusual happened).

25

COPIES OF THE HOWLING TO BE WON!

Yet another competition, courtesy of Dede Miller and Hamlyn paperbacks. All you have to do is to name the human form of

the werewolf shown in the photograph and the actor who plays him. What could be easier?

The first 25 correct entries out of the mail bag will each win a copy of *The Howling*. This competition is not open to John Bowles nor to his immediate family!



Far left: The cover of the novel version of *The Howling*. But remember, the novel did come first. Left: Christopher Priest, author of the new book *The Affirmation*.

TV ZONE

During some gruelling bouts of tv trivia with a couple of friends recently the following "What's the show?" signature tunes cropped up: "It's about time, it's about space..." "Everybody knows that in the second life you come back sooner or later. As anything from a pussy cat to a man-eating alligator..."; along with such "Which character from which show?" questions as "Uncle Martin", "Lurch", and "Phoebe Figgilly".

All of this, needless to say, stimulated memories of the old, more bizarre situation comedies seen on the home screen—such personal favourites as *The Addams Family*, *Get Smart*, *The Munsters*, etc. So, I later drew up a list of about twenty or so sit-coms, of a fantasy or absurd nature, some of which I have slowly fading memory of and some of which just sounded intriguing enough for inclusion.

One of the earliest telecasts was *Topper*, based on the books by Thorne Smith, about a very conservative banker who is haunted and taunted by the ghosts of a young, free-wheeling couple who had previously occupied his house and who had died during a skiing holiday. Leo G. Carroll played the confused and continually embarrassed Cosmo Topper, always having to conceal or make supposedly reasonable excuses for the mischievous activities of the mostly-unseen ghosts (Anne Jeffreys and Robert Sterling). Though dated, some of the silly "ghostly" effects are still quite funny; *Topper* was first seen via America's CBS-tv in 1953.

Many later sit-coms also used the theme of an "innocent" being plagued by some "supernatural" presence, with the spirit or whatever usually trying to be helpful but achieving little more than chaos for the "normal" character. *Bewitched*, running initially from 1964 to '72, became one of the most popular "supernatural" sit-coms. Dick York and Elizabeth Montgomery were a young, married couple—with a difference. She was an attractive young witch, determined to give up witchcraft and be "mortal", and he was the confused and continually alarmed husband, trying to cope with the lightning visitations of her relatives, all of them witches and warlocks. The usual mother-in-law caricature took on a whole new form here, with Agnes Moorehead as a delightfully sadistic witch bent on disrupting the marriage. In late 1965, another long-running comedy in a similar vein appeared; *I Dream of Jeannie* has astronaut Larry Hagman, after an aborted mission, land on a remote desert island and discover an old bottle—containing a 2000-year-old but extremely beautiful genie (played by Barbara Eden). The lunatic comedy that followed was supplied by Jeannie's attempts with modern-day customs and gadgets. Sadly, *Jeannie* just ended up being Elizabeth Montgomery in an *Arabian Nights* outfit.

The Smothers Brothers Show, which started around the same time, featured Dick Smothers as a publishing executive whose brother Tom, lost at sea some years earlier, returned as an apprentice angel on a mission to do good and thus win his wings. Naturally, his efforts to help, for the most part, would go wrong and would involve Dick in rectifying some crazy situation. Not too far removed from this theme was *Randall and Hopkirk—Deceased* (aka *My Partner the Ghost*), about a private detective whose partner had been killed earlier and who had returned as his "ghostly" assistant. Although it is debatable whether it was meant to be a crazy comedy with moments of drama, the memories of ghostly, white-suited Kenneth Cope disappearing at the first sign of trouble, leaving partner Mike Pratt to be beaten to a pulp by the bad guys, fondly remain.

Some of the early '60s sit-coms, featuring a "gimmick" or a "gadget", still seem to stand among the most memorable of all. Alan Young's talking horse, *Mr Ed*, ran for six years and was—in its own



way—a continuation of the earlier movie series of Francis, the Talking Mule. Bypassing the initial lunatic concept of a talking pelomino, it developed into a fine reversal of roles, with the horse observing Young's life (thus ours) and behaviour with a cynical, witty humour. In another format, *My Favourite Martian*

came across a theme not unlike *I Dream of Jeannie*, by way of an "innocent" becoming attached to another-worldly character—this time Ray Walston's magnificent earth-marooned Mertran. All the effects trickery (as in *Bewitched* and *Jeannie*) was there—controlled invisibility, finger-conducted

Left above: Fred Gwynn as Herman Munster from the tv series, *The Munsters*. Left below: Al Lewis as Grandpa from the same tv show. Below: Barbara Eden as Jeannie in the tv show *I Dream of Jeannie*.



levitation, etc. Bill Bixby was a writer who accidentally "adopted" the Martini (whom the other characters knew only as "Uncle Martin") while the alien was repairing his crashed spacecraft (in Bixby's back yard, as I remember).

On the "gadget" side of things, there was My

Living Doll and *My Mother the Car*; the former a female robot, the latter a vintage automobile. *My Living Doll* appeared in 1964 and featured Robert Cummings as a psychiatrist who is left in charge of a perfectly designed and programmed robot, played by the curvaceous Julie Newmar (a couple of years

before she became Catwoman for the *Batman* teleseries). Naturally, the Bob Cummings tv persona tried to make the female robot his idea of a "perfect" woman—an idea that, should the series be rerun today, would present a rather dangerous air among the more fanatical of women activists. *My Mother the Car*, on the other hand, had Jerry Van Dyke driving around in the reincarnation of his mother, a nifty little 1927 Porter. This one was a variation of the *Mr Ed* theme, with the car (and Ann Sothern's voice) being Van Dyke's "very own guiding star" through a variety of domestic predicaments.

Two of the most popular, and weirdest, of sit-com families premiered during the same month in 1964—*The Addams Family* and *The Munsters*. Originally from cartoon characters created by Charles Addams, *The Addams Family* were a creepy bunch consisting of Morticia (Carolyn Jones), Gomez (John Astin), Uncle Fester (Jackie Coogan), Lurch (Ted Cassidy), Grandmama (Blossom Rock), and the children, Pugsley and Wednesday. There was also a disembodied hand in a box which responded to the name of "Thing." Although Lurch the butler, a Frankenstein monster-like character, was fun whenever some naïve visitor happened upon the house, John Astin's Gomez was truly the most craziest member of the brood; Gomez would try anything the moment the feeling hit him, like racing a motorcycle through a flaming hoop or taming a lion—all in the confines of the Addams' spacious living-room!

The family lineup for *The Munsters* consisted of Herman (Fred Gwynn), Lily (Yvonne DeCarlo), Grandpa (Al Lewis), Eddie (Butch Patrick) and Marilyn (played variously by Beverly Owen and Pat Priest). Whereas the Addams family just looked like monsters, *The Munsters* were monsters; Herman was a replica of the old Karloff Frankenstein monster, Lily a vampire figure, Grandpa a Count Dracula look-alike with the ability to change into a bat, and young Eddie was a sort of junior wolfman. However, the Munsters' basic problem was with their niece, Marilyn—for she was just plain normal, a constant source of concern for the rest of the not-so-normal family. Both series ran from 1964 to 1966, and both had weird homes and even weirder families as the ground-plan, but their similarity ended after the basic structure. *The Addams Family* appeared to be very much a self-contained lot, rarely intruding into other areas and into other people's lives. They usually managed to overcome any problems (inflicted by the outside world) by either being too smart or just too crazy for normal people to handle. *The Munsters*, however, were much more vulnerable. Their entire world could be tipped upside down if a city official or some other appeared on their doorstep, or if Herman was threatened with unemployment from his menial place in a funeral home. Not so much was their sadness for the Marilyn-problem, or their coming to terms with local bureaucracy, but with the real world's unacceptance of them and their appearance. For their thoughts, it was they who were normal, and everyone else was surely the one with a problem.

I've just realized that I've run out of space with this column and that I'll have to wrap-up the rest of the bizarre sit-coms in a part 2 sometime. However, a last thought on the world of "weird" situation comedies: the stream of pure fantasy comedies is entirely dependent on the players and the performance of their characters—whereas, for the most part, all other, regular sit-coms sink or survive on the strength of the writing (items like *Sgt Bilko*, *Hancock's Half Hour* and *Till Death Us Do Part* are rare exceptions). You may remember John Astin's Gomez Addams, for instance, or Ray Walston's Uncle Martin, but how many sit-com writers from these shows do you also remember?

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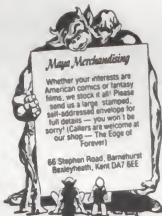
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A STARBURST INTERVIEW WITH SARAH DOUGLAS

MIKE MUNN TALKS TO THE ACTRESS WHO HAS PORTRAYS THE KRYPTONIAN VILLAINESS URSA IN BOTH THE *SUPERMAN* MOVIES, ABOUT HER INVOLVEMENT IN THE SERIES.

Sarah Douglas — as Ursa, supervillainess from Krypton — and Margot Kidder — as Lois Lane, ace reporter of the Daily Planet — get to grips in Superman II.



You really mustn't take all that Sarah Douglas says too seriously, or you could come away with the impression that she's absolutely sick to death of *Superman—The Movie*, *Superman II* and *Superman—The Promotional Tour*.

And you can't really blame her. She has virtually carried full responsibility of promoting *Superman II* all on her lonesome for a hectic period of six months during which she lost track of which country she was in.

Also, she has been waiting four years for her performance as super-villain Ursa to reach the screens, since we only caught a glimpse of her standing alongside fellow heavies Terence Stamp and Jack O'Halloran at the beginning of the first *Superman* movie.

If you think that perhaps Sarah is being a little impatient, I'm sure she'd like you to know that since doing *Superman* she has not been able to do much work elsewhere. Before that she did well for herself in films like *The Final Programme*, *The Brute* and *The People That Time Forgot*. A vast amount of her acting talents went to television, but, she points out, since

Superman the tv people consider her a film actress, and so the work out-put has not been overwhelming. Maybe now that *Superman II* is actually on the screens Sarah might just get the break she was dreaming of four long years ago.

"Yes, four years of *Superman*, on and off," said an exhausted Sarah, dropping onto a cosy executive office sofa in the Warner Brothers offices in Soho. She'd just had lunch with a Warner executive and was drained from talking about all the things she was going to have to expound again to me.

"The first year I did ten months work on *Superman I* and *II*, but they didn't complete Part 2, so they contracted me to go back the next year," explained Sarah.

"I was ready to go back but they weren't ready for me, so I didn't work but I was paid for the summer. The third year they had me back for another nine or ten months which was actually from August '79 to March '80. And then last year I had about three months off and then started the promotional tour which started in September and here I am four years later."

"Why didn't they complete Part 2 with Part 1 as originally planned?" I politely enquired.

"Both parts should have been shot together," she explained. "They concentrated on Part 2 to begin with, and we hardly did anything on Part 1. In fact, I worked for nine months first time round. Then Warner Brothers said, 'Hey you guys,' or whatever Warner Brothers say, 'You haven't done anything on Part 1.'"

"So they shelved Part 2 to be completed the following year. Then they discovered that they had to include the destruction of Metropolis in Part 2 and by the time they came to it they hadn't worked out how the hell to do it. So in the two years duration they perfected a way of flying and by the time we came back Richard Donner had gone and we had to start all over again with Richard Lester.

"There are little bits in Part 2 that we had originally done with Donner which I've tried to pin down, but I can't really. Most of it is Lester's work."

In what way did they perfect the flying? I asked. "In *Superman I* they used a lot of wires, in *Superman 2* it was all done in body moulds."

Ah, what's a "body mould", I asked.

"They got a sort of a pole-arm that comes out of a blue backing screen forty feet off the ground, and at the end of this pole they've got a plaster cast mould of my body. They actually put me in a bath of plaster of Paris. The head was the most awful part. They stuck two straws up my nose and said, 'Breathe!' So they take the body mould and they use from your chest to your knees and that is fixed to the end of the pole and then I'd come in dressed in my bra and pants and then I lie down in the mould and I'm dressed over the mould and my body.

"Now there is a camera over there and because of the angle of the camera my body obliterates the pole. I don't move. The pole does not traverse at all. What moves is the computerised camera, and somehow, somewhere, while I'm lying there for nine months, that camera makes me fly."

"Because of the camera angle and the pole it's practically impossible to have more than one person flying. So most of the time you're flying on your own and most of the time you think you're going crazy, and most of the time you are going crazy. You're all alone, forty feet up, you can't move and there you lie all day. It's really awful."

"At least when we did *Superman I* we did quite a bit on wires which in fact is quite fun because you did get a sensation of movement. But on *Part 2* I was so high up with the camera a long way away and there was nobody to speak to, that in the beginning I'd say 'What scene am I going to do now,' but it got to the point where I didn't give a damn, because you can't see anything, you're lying there all alone thinking of England most of the time or what to cook for your supper!"

But you did a lot more in the movie than fly around, I pointed out.

"Well, I don't say that much; it keeps being cut out," she replied. "But thank goodness I make up for it in the old dynamic field like chucking men over my shoulder."



"The destruction of Metropolis was great fun, and I was very surprised to find that people think that all the cars we super-villains blow about with our super-breath were dinky toys. They were real cars, and they did it with a huge thick wire that just pulls them along."

"There were the little things like picking up the bus which is on a chain. There was a fraction of a second when the chain moved a little bit and the bus moved just a fraction. And because for that split

second I had superpowers, I held it instead of giving way and I ripped the muscles in my shoulder. Richard Lester said, 'Why didn't you just relax your arms?' and I said, 'You can't because for that split second you think you can hold it.'

"Then there's the scene where I throw a manhole cover like a frisbee. They kept me waiting for two hours. I went out into the pouring rain and Lester said, 'Okay Sarah, you've got to walk up to manhole cover and toss it into the air, catch it in your hand and



Top left: Jor-El (Marion Brando) sentences the three Kryptonian criminals, Zod (Terence Stamp), Non (Jack O'Halloran), and Urse (Sarah Douglas), to an indefinite period in the Phantom Zone. Top right: The three Kryptonian villains make a dramatic entrance into the offices of the Daily Planet. Above: Television news crews record the arrival of the super-criminals on Earth and their first brush with Terran authorities. Opposite above: Non and Urse life a bus into the air on the streets of Metropolis. Opposite below: The three criminals, with Lois Lane as their hostage, await the arrival of Superman in *Superman II*.



throw it."

"I thought, 'That sounds a bit difficult, but who am I to question our director?' It wasn't a reel manhole cover, but it was heavy, and I did it first time and hit Chris Reeve in the stomach and it was perfect. Then there was a ripple of applause from the crew. It turned out they'd spent two hours trying to work out how on Earth I was going to do it. Lester had said, 'Well, we'll just get her out here and tell her to do it.'"

"Greet film to work on! Anything else you want to

know?"

Did it make much difference switching from Richard Donner to Richard Lester?

"Yes, there was a difference," she answered, "because Donner was very adamant that in the beginning the super-villains would have no relationships with each other. I was totally asexual and would not react in any way to anything. Basically I was a cardboard cut-out."

"Richard Lester had very specific ideas, then

goodness, where it becomes obvious that Zod, played by Stamp, and Ursa do work as a team, so that was one thing Lester brought out."

"He even redesigned my costume from what it was in Part 1 to give me more of a feminine shape like more cleavage. And I was allowed to smile and react. Plus Lester gave Stamp and I the chance to work out little things, small technical details that Lester likes. Donner was very wham, bam, thank you ma'am and let's get on with it. For instance, there's a sequence where Stamp and I walk into a bar. Lester allowed us time out together to time our walking so that there is something about the way we walk that is slightly different to the normal person. We walk something like tigers, slightly balletic. Little details like that he allowed us to bring out."

"Richard Donner took endless days to shoot a scene. With Lester if you don't get it right on the second take you're in a lot of trouble. He's very spontaneous, very technical and most of the time you're working with two cameras at once. One doing a close-up and the other the master shot."

"I was allowed to develop the idea that Ursa is really an innocent who comes from another planet. When she first discovers she can burn a snake with her eyes, it comes from innocence, because she doesn't know she has these powers. People always say how wicked Ursa is. I say, well who's worse, Ursa or Lois Lane? One minute Lois is with Clark Kent, and then she's with Superman. And she actually goes to bed with Clark Kent? Why not Superman? He is Clark Kent at that point. Think about it."

Having thought about it I told Sarah that the bed scene is totally out of place in the film anyway.

"Yes, I disagree with that sequence," she said. "I think it's totally unnecessary. Love interest is fine. But I don't think they should go to bed together. And I don't think he would sacrifice all his superpowers. I saw it in England and the audience was jeering and hooting at that sequence and it's supposed to be deadly serious."

I asked Sarah how, after working together on and off for four years, the relationships between the cast had developed.

"In the end it was English vs Americans," she said. "It was very interesting to see how everybody changed from the time we'd finished Part 1 to the time we started again on Part 2."

"On Part 1 Terry Stamp had been very innerself-ish, having spent several years in India, but by the time he got to Part 2 he had changed. I'd tease him about his inner light having dimmed. We had a good laugh and got on well. It made a change from his drinking mint tea and humming in his dressing room!"

"Now the Americans... I Gene Heckman I adore. Mergot was on her second divorce by the time we got





into Part 2, having gone through her first divorce on Part 1, so that was all a bit trying."

"Christopher Reeve—what can I say? I think he was getting a bit wrapped up in Superman. Having said that I must admit that it's like that even with me and Ursula in that you do almost get taken over by the character. A wardrobe lady on the film said to me

once, 'There were times when you were a bit like Ursula,' and that's probably true. And Chris certainly has a lot to live up to. I get a little giggling from the kids in the street with 'Alright darlin', show us yer X-ray eyes then, let's see yer fly.' It must be worse for Chris."

"We all started work on the first day but by the end

of the film Chris couldn't remember anybody's name, and I was a little disappointed to find he didn't really remember who I was."

Now it's all over. The film has been released. Millions are finally going to see what Sarah actually gets up to on the screen. And Hollywood producers could well be watching closely.



Above: Ursa (Sarah Douglas) and her two companions, Zed and Non, alter the faces carved in the rock of Mount Rushmore. Left: Ursa lifts a bus as the passengers scramble for safety during the battle of 42nd Street. Far left: Ursa looks on as Non picks up a police car to investigate a rifle which has been dropped by a police officer.




CLASH OF THE TITANS

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Presents A CHARLES H. SCHNEER Production

CLASH OF THE TITANS^A

Starring HARRY HAMLIN as Perseus JUDI BOWKER as Andromeda
and BURGESS MEREDITH MAGGIE SMITH URSULA ANDRESS CLAIRE BLOOM
SIAN PHILLIPS FLORA ROBSON and LAURENCE OLIVIER as Zeus

Creator of Special Visual Effects RAY HARRYHAUSEN Written by BEVERLEY CROSS Produced by CHARLES H. SCHNEER and RAY HARRYHAUSEN Directed by DESMOND DAVIS

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